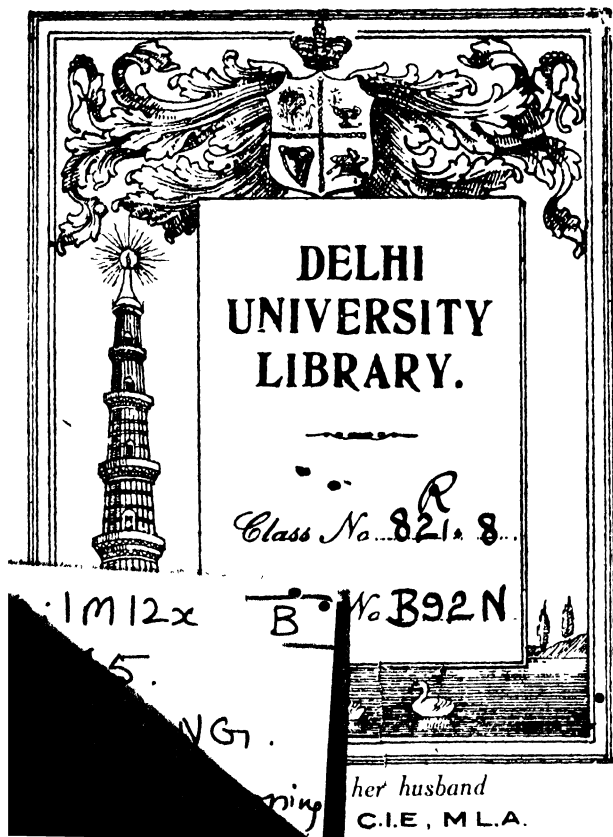


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BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

SELECTED & EDITED BY
HENRY NEWBOLT



THOMAS NELSON
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INTRODUCTION

ROBERT BROWNING's life had some resemblance to that of the poet in his *How it Strikes a Contemporary*, though his disguise was more complete and more piquant than that of the lean corregidor of Valladolid. Like his own creation, he lived in the full sight of his contemporaries, a man of the world in the best sense, for years a popular, companionable figure in many social circles in London. He was born of prosperous middle-class stock in Camberwell on May 7, 1812, and was educated largely at home in a bookish household. In his twenty-second year he began to travel, and between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-eight published *Pauline*, *Paracelsus*, and *Sordello*, poems which puzzled the few people who read them, and also his first play, *Strafford*, which was produced by Macready at Covent Garden. Between 1841 and 1846 the eight numbers of *Bells and Pomegranates* appeared, a collection which included six dramas, one of which was *Pippa Passes*, and various short lyrical narrative poems, such as *The Flight of the Duchess*, *Waring*, *Cavalier Tunes*, and the exquisite *Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli*. In 1846 he married Elizabeth Barrett—the great romance and adventure of his life,

the tale of which may be read in Mr. Chesterton's biography. His fifteen years of marriage saw the perfection of his talent. Much of his time was spent in Italy, and the poems published during this period include the two volumes of *Men and Women* and *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*. He had now an established reputation, and men had awakened to the fact that a new teacher and singer was among them : one who could draw with a strange subtlety portraits in verse which for all its strangeness had a singular lyrical beauty, and who, moreover, had a gospel to preach more comforting than the easy optimism of more mellifluous poets.

In *Dramatis Personæ*, which appeared three years after Mrs. Browning's death, there is less of the lyrical and more of the ironic and philosophical ; but, however harsh the realism, the creed of beauty and love and courage has not changed. In 1868-9 the four volumes of the *Ring and the Book* were issued, a retelling of a sordid seventeenth-century tale in a new manner. All the protagonists speak from their own point of view—the murdered Pompilia, her husband Guido, the priest Giuseppe Caponsacchi, the lawyers on both sides, and the Roman gossips—and Pope Innocent sums up. It is one of the longest, strangest, and greatest poems in modern literature—a candid representation of incompatible points of view most skilfully woven together and brought to a fitting dramatic climax ; and the language, while maintained generally at the pitch of ordinary narrative, rises often to the heights of epic beauty. In the work of Browning's later years the singer was often forgotten in the thinker.

He continued his portraiture of strange souls, and he experimented in versions of Greek tragedies. His odd mannerisms grew upon him, and the weight of his thought often became too much for his verse, but to the end he had moments of high lyrical beauty, as in the Epilogue to *Asolando*.

Browning's normality of life, which was free of prophetic affectations or fastidious seclusion from the common round, gives us the key to the chief quality of his mind. He is passionately interested in all forms of human nature. He is eager to know exactly how men and women think and feel, and therefore his chief work is in spiritual portraiture; but, unlike Walter Pater, whose characters wear but a thin garment of flesh, though we can follow all their mental processes, he represents them usually in moments of tense drama, and does not forget their physical envelope. He has the zest of the novelist for every kind of detail, and to his strong, wholesome good sense nothing comes amiss in the way of vice or madness or abnormality. Whatever is or has been human is his province, and he has the gusto of an antiquary in digging into the dust of the past. No one, not even Chaucer, has given us such a gallery of masterful and fully realized portraits.

But he is a poet, not a painter, and he seeks also to interpret, and to see his figures *sub specie æternitatis*. Some words which he once wrote of Shelley explain his purpose. Shelley, he says, aimed at seeing things transcendently, as Plato saw his ideas, "not what man sees but what God sees." Browning's aim was the whole truth—not the imperfect apprehensions of

the participants in the drama, but God's truth. In the *Ring and the Book* he shows us every angle of human motive, conflicting virtues, partial honesties, fragmentary verities, and emerging out of the medley the glimmering of a reconciliation in some divine purpose.

This is the base of that philosophy which has endeared him to all dealers in popular metaphysics. No English poet had a greater power of arguing in verse, for he presents not only dramatic moments and brilliant images, but a reasoned exposition. The main tenets of his creed are simple: freedom at all costs, as became a protagonist of the Italian Risorgimento—freedom which, as in *Waring*, may be almost purposeless, and, as in *The Flight of the Duchess*, fantastic; a passionate theism built up on the vision of Christ in the Fourth Gospel; the insistence upon love as at once the test and the true happiness of mankind; a stalwart Viking morality, a strenuous faith in an after life, and a conviction that this world is a place of probation. His creed is commonly called optimistic, but it is a merciless optimism. It takes us down into the depths, and shows us some spark of good surviving in the basest. He hides his eyes from nothing of the ugliness of life, but after accepting a blacker picture than most pessimists would admit, still declares that "the smooth will bloom from the rough." Such a creed is one of courage and profound vitality, with nothing of the sentimental or the ascetic about it. He will not suffer any part of life to be rejected, for everything can be turned to noble uses.

“ Let us not always say,
 ‘ Spite of this flesh to-day
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole ! ’
 As the bird wings and sings,
 Let us cry, ‘ All good things
 ‘ Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul.’ ”

It is a gospel which had immense influence on the poet's day and generation, and it is one which will never lose its hold on men, for it is of the centre, and it is based upon ultimate human needs. The verse in which he embodied it is not always poetry ; for though every rift is loaded with ore, that ore is often argumentation rather than art. Nevertheless he is a great artist and an original artist, for, in spite of his learning, he owed little to predecessors, and hammered out for himself new forms. Of these forms he is a complete master, and can use at will a grotesque and knotted style and the most limpid and exquisite cadences. The great lyric poet was never quite driven out by the dialectician, and the flute notes are always there in the pauses of the big drums, like the “ chorus ending from Euripides ” in *Bishop Blougram*. He was so large and rich that he was as uncritical as an Elizabethan, and a selection can do justice to his chief poetic gifts, though a reading of the whole is needed to appreciate the width of his intellectual range. Both in his blank verse and in his lyrics he has produced examples as purely classical in their beauty as anything in English literature. The *Ring and the Book* stands by itself, alone in its class ; for the rest, his finest work is to be sought, perhaps, in the short pieces of *Men and Women* and *Dramatis*

Personæ, such as *Love among the Ruins*, *The Bishop Orders his Tomb*, *My Last Duchess*, and *Andrea del Sarto*. Of the great Victorians he was the robustest and the sanest ; he has left a residuum secure of immortality at least as large as that of any other contemporary ; and he has the peculiar merit of not only enshrining the best of the Victorian culture, but of providing a corrective to its faults.

J. B.

The complete edition of Browning's works is published in two volumes, edited by Sir F. G. Kenyon. There are many popular reprints and selections. The life has been written by W. H. Griffin and H. C. Minchin (1910), and shortly and brilliantly by Mr. G. K. Chesterton (1903). The late Sir Henry Jones's *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher* is a valuable guide to the affiliations of his thought. There are numerous critical studies, among the best of which are Mr. Chesterton's book and Mr. Arthur Symonds's *Introduction to the Study of Browning* (1906).

PARACELSUS

PERSONS

• •
AUREOLUS PARACELUS, a student

FESTUS and MICHAL, his friends

APRILE, an Italian poet

POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING

PARACELSUS

I.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE, *Würzburg ; a garden in the environs.* 1512

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL

Par. Come close to me, dear friends ; still closer ;
thus !

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there !
For if you would remember me aright,
As I was born to be, you must forget
All fitful strange and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends !
—My heart no truer, but my words and ways

More true to it : as Michal, some months hence,
 Will say, " this autumn was a pleasant time,"
 For some few sunny days ; and overlook
 Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
 Autumn would fain be sunny ; I would look
 Likier my nature's truth : and both are frail,
 And both beloved, for all our frailty.

Mich.

Aureole !

Par. Drop by drop ! she is weeping like a child !
 Not so ! I am content—more than content ;
 Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute
 Appeal to sympathy for its decay :
 Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
 Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down,
 Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,
 That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
 Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among !
 Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
 Shall vex that ash which overlooks you both,
 So proud it wears its berries ? Ah, at length,
 The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
 Sequestered nest !—this kingdom, limited
 Alone by one old populous green wall
 Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
 Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders, —
 Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
 Which, look through near, this way, and it appears
 A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
 Of bulrush whitening in the sun : laugh now !
 Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
 Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
 Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,
 Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
 Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

Mich. In truth we have lived carelessly and well.

Par. And shall, my perfect pair !—each, trust me, born
 For the other ; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
 Is of one hue. For where save in this nook

Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune ? Stay : that plant
Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success ! Ah see, the sun sinks broad
Behind Saint Saviour's : wholly gone, at last !

Fest. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile !
You are ours to-night at least ; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
Could willing leave what he so seemed to love :
But that last look destroys my dream—that look
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star !
How far was Würzburg with its church and spire
And garden-walls and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting ? •

Par. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks and words,—
Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
And fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here ;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
Beside, this Festus knows he hold me one
Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too filled with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights his own heart garners up :
Whereas behold how much our sense of all
That's beauteous proves alike ! When Festus learns

That every common pleasure of the world
 Affects me as himself ; that I have just
 As varied appetite for joy derived
 From common things ; a stake in life, in short,
 Like his ; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
 That life affords not, would as soon destroy ;—
 He may convince himself that, this in view,
 I shall act well advised. And last, because,
 Though heaven and earth and all things were at stake,
 Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve.

Fest. True : and the eve is deepening, and we sit
 As little anxious to begin our talk
 As though to-morrow I could hint of it
 As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
 At sun-dawn ; or could whisper it by fits
 (Trithemius busied with his class the while)
 In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
 Half-frightened by the awful tomes around ;
 Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
 From even-blush to midnight : but, to-morrow !
 Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind ?
 We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
 Will rise between us :—all my freest mind ?
 'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !

Par.

Oh, say on !

Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
 To be performed for you : say on ! If night
 Be spent the while, the better ! Recall how oft
 My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes and fears
 Have—never wearied you, oh no !—as I
 Recall, and never vividly as now,
 Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
 And its green hills were all the world to us ;
 And still increasing to this night which ends
 My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one day
 You shall be very proud ! Say on, dear friends !

Fest. In truth ? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed,
 Rather than yours ; for vain all projects seem

To stay your course : I said my latest hope
Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy dispatched to win
The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend ; and yet desist
No whit from projects where repose nor love
Have part.

Par. Once more ? Alas ! As I foretold.

Fest. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish ?
That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission, and so die !
You bid me listen for your true love's sake :
Yet how has grown that love ? Even in a long
And patient cherishing of the selfsame spirit
It now would quell ; as though a mother hoped
To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
From aught which marked me out apart from men :
I would have lived their life, and died their death,
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny :
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
Taught me to know mankind and know myself ;
And now that I am strong and full of hope,
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
Save those your earnest words made plain to me,
Now that I touch the brink of my design,
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely !

Fest.

When you deign

To hear my purpose . . .

Par. Hear it ? I can say
 Beforehand all this evening's conference !
 'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses : first,
 Or he declares, or I, the leading points
 Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end
 And what God's will ; no two faiths e'er agreed
 As his with mine. Next, each of us allows
 Faith should be acted on as best we may ;
 Accordingly, I venture to submit
 My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
 The path which God's will seems to authorize :
 Well, he discerns much good in it, avows
 This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
 A danger here to be avoided, there
 An oversight to be repaired : in fine
 Our two minds go together—all the good
 Approved by him, I gladly recognize,
 All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,
 And nought forbids my looking up at last
 For some stray comfort in his cautious brow.
 When, lo ! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks
 Some innate and inexplicable germ
 Of failure in my scheme ; so that at last
 It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
 That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
 In living just as though no God there were ;
 A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
 Folly of man, Festus abhors the most ;
 But which these tenets sanctify at once,
 Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
 Consider it how they may.

Mich. Is it so, Festus ?
 He speaks so calmly and kindly : is it so ?

Par. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
 And man's design ; laugh loud that God should send
 Vast longings to direct us ; say how soon
 Power satiates these, or lust, or gold ; I know

The world's cry well, and how to answer it.
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Fest. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it ?—for his sake, not yours ? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you ;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words
Erringly apprehended, a new creed
Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,
Had share in your undoing.

Par. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce : but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.

Fest. Prove that to me—but that ! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you ; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect ; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth !
You smile ; but I had gathered from slow thought—
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain ;
But it all leaves me at my need : in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.

Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should
scorn . . .

Fest. Stay, Michal : Aureole, I speak guardedly
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long since
Gave birth to, nourished and at length matures
This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
Where I was born your elder by some years

Only to watch you fully from the first :
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then—'twas mine to have you in my view
As you had your own soul and those intents
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach
A portion of his lore : and not one youth
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
Came earnest as you came, resolved, like you,
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.
Now, this new ardour which supplants the old,
I watched, too ; 'twas significant and strange,
In one matched to his soul's content at length
With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize,
To see the sudden pause, the total change ;
From contest, the transition to repose—
From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
That careless bearing, free from all pretence
Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
What it professed to praise—though not so well
Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce and brief,
Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed.
That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,
I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to spring
Upon his foe's throat ; but it was not thus :
Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
That you prepared to task to the uttermost
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim.

Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
 Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
 In scope that it included their best flights,
 Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
 In place of many,—the secret of the world,
 Of man, and man's true purpose, path and fate.
 —That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
 This purpose, with the sages of the past,
 Have struck upon a way to this, if all
 You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
 You, if a man may, dare aspire to know :
 And that this aim shall differ from a host
 Of aims alike in character and kind,
 Mostly in this,—that in itself alone
 Shall its reward be, not an alien end
 Blending therewith ; no hope nor fear nor joy
 Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
 Devotion to sustain you or betray :
 Thus you aspire.

Par. You shall not state it thus :
 I should not differ from the dreamy crew
 You speak of. I profess no other share
 In the selection of my lot, than this
 My ready answer to the will of God
 Who summons me to be his organ. All
 Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
 No better than the sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
 God sets before you ; and 'tis doubtless need
 That he appoint no less the way of praise
 Than the desire to praise ; for, though I hold
 With you, the setting forth such praise to be
 The natural end and service of a man,
 And hold such praise is best attained when man
 Attains the general welfare of his kind—
 Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.
 Presume not to serve God apart from such
 Appointed channel as he wills shall gather

Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience
 Valued perchance. He seeks not that his altars
 Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.
 Suppose this, then ; that God selected you
 To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith
 Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
 I cannot think you dare annex to such
 Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
 An intense hope ; nor let your gifts create
 Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
 Conducive to success, make destiny
 Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search
 Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
 Whether you have not rather wild desire
 For this distinction than security
 Of its existence ? whether you discern
 The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
 Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
 Clear as your yearning to be singled out
 For its pursuer. Dare you answer this ?

Par. [after a pause.] No, I have nought to fear !

Who will may know

The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
 It be so ?—if indeed the strong desire
 Eclipse the aim in me ?—if splendour break
 Upon the outset of my path alone,
 And duskest shade succeed ? What fairer seal
 Shall I require to my authentic mission
 Then this fierce energy ?—this instinct striving
 Because its nature is to strive ?—enticed
 By the security of no broad course,
 Without success forever in its eyes !
 How know I else such glorious fate my own,
 But in the restless irresistible force
 That works within me ? Is it for human will
 To institute such impulses ?—still less,
 To disregard their promptings ! What should I
 Do, kept among you all ; your loves, your cares,

Your life—all to be mine ? Be sure that God
 Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart !
 Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
 Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
 What full-grown power informs her from the first,
 Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
 The silent boundless regions of the sky !
 Be sure they sleep not whom God needs ! Nor fear
 Their holding light his charge, when every hour
 That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
 This for the faith in which I trust ; and hence
 I can abjure so well the idle arts
 These pedants strive to learn and teach ; Black Arts,
 Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—
 Let others prize : too intimate a tie
 Connects me with our God ! A sullen fiend
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
 To help me—what are these, at best, beside
 God helping, God directing everywhere,
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
 And every object there be charged to strike,
 Teach, gratify her master God appoints ?
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and free !
 I can devote myself ; I have a life
 To give ; I, singled out for this, the One !
 Think, think ; the wide East, where all Wisdom sprung ;
 The bright South, where she dwelt ; the hopeful North,
 All are passed o'er—it lights on me ! 'Tis time
 New hopes should animate the world, new light
 Should dawn from new revealings to a race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long ; thus shall
 The heaven reserved for us at last receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
 Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below.

Fest. My words have their old fate and make faint
 stand

Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—
Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
Some one of Learning's many palaces,
After approved example?—seeking there
Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
Who laid up treasure with the like intent
—So lift yourself into their airy place,
And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
Might do much at their vigour's waning-point ;
Succeeding with new-breathed new-hearted force,
As at old games the runner snatched the torch
From runner still : this way success might be.
But you have coupled with your enterprise,
An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
What books are in the desert ? Writes the sea
The secret of her yearning in vast caves
Where yours will fall the first of human feet ?
Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught
You press to read ? Why turn aside from her
To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn ?
Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay,
Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
She called an endless curse on, so it came :
Or worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
Ignoblest troops who never heard her voice
Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be !
Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone :
Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
Your rivals throng, the sages : here stand you !
Whatever you may protest, knowledge is not

Paramount in your love ; or for her sake
 You would collect all help from every source—
 Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
 In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.

Par.

What shall I say ?

Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
 By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
 As from without some master, so it seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current : this but ill
 Expresses what I would convey : but rather
 I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
 Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
 So became manifest. I knew not then
 What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
 At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
 Were laid away in some great *trance*—the ages
 Coming and going all the while—till dawned
 His true time's advent ; and could then record
 The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed,—
 Then I might tell more of the breath so light
 Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
 Among my hair. Youth is confused ; yet never
 So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
 I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
 A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
 And having this within me and about me
 While *Einsiedeln*, its mountains, lakes and woods
 Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
 When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
 The everlasting concourse of mankind !
 Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew
 The purpose of the pageant, or the place
 Consigned me in its ranks—while, just awake,
 Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
 'Twas then that least supportable appeared
 A station with the brightest of the crowd,
 A portion with the proudest of them all.

And from the tumult in my breast, this only
 Could I collect, that I must thenceforth die
 Or elevate myself far, far above
 The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
 At once to trample on, yet save mankind,
 To make some unexampled sacrifice
 In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good
 From heaven or earth for them, to perish, winning
 Eternal weal in the act : as who should dare
 Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
 That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
 No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep :
 Yet never to be mixed with men so much
 As to have part even in my own work, share
 In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
 I would withdraw from their officious praise,
 Would gently put aside their profuse thanks,
 Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
 Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
 Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;
 When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
 His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
 Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
 His realm : and he points, smiling, to his scarf
 Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet
 Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the East,
 Where these must be displayed !

Fest.

Good : let us hear

No more about your nature, " which first shrank
 From all that marked you out apart from men ! "

Par. I touch on that ; these words but analyse
 The first mad impulse : 'twas as brief as fond,
 For as I gazed again upon the show,
 I soon distinguished here and there a shape
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
 Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
 Interpret my own thoughts :—" Behold the clue
 To all," I rashly said, " and what I pine

To do, these have accomplished : we are peers.
They know, and therefore rule : I, too, will know ! ”
You were beside me, Festus, as you say ;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom fame
Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
Would satiate my cravings when obtained,
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts
A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
Or staggered only at his own vast wits ;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
That struggle ; suffice it, that I loathed myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me ; and this lasted till one night
When, as I sat revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said—“ Seest thou not,
Desponding child, whence spring defeat and loss ?
Even from thy strength. Consider : hast thou gazed
Presumptuously on wisdom’s countenance,
No veil between ; and can thy faltering hands,
Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,
Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
Whom radiance ne’er distracted ? Live their life
If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their eyes
Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
In profitless waiting for the gods’ descent,
But have some idol of thine own to dress
With their array. Know, not for knowing’s sake,
But to become a star to men for ever ;
Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds :
Look one step onward, and secure that step ! ”
And I smiled as one never smiles but once,

Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
 Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
 And God himself, and all God's intercourse
 With the human mind ; I understood, no less,
 My fellows' studies, whose true worth I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
 And softer came the voice—" There is a way :
 'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
 With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first
 Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength :
 Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
 Apart from all reward ? " And last it breathed—
 " Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by thee,
 Be sure, even to the end ! "—I answered not,
 Knowing him. As he spoke, I was endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will ;
 And when he ceased, my brow was sealed his own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue
 Thenceforward ?—pregnant with vast consequence,
 Teeming with grand result, loaded with fate ?
 So that when, quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone—at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !
 I see my way as birds their trackless way.
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not : but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
 In some time, his good time, I shall arrive :
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time !

Mich. Vex him no further, Festus ; it is so !

Fest. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet

Of many a mighty marcher gone that way.
You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
But they were famous in their day—the proofs
Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Par. Their light ! the sum of all is briefly this ;
They laboured and grew famous, and the fruits
Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils, what of all their lore abates ?
No ; I reject and spurn them utterly
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns ?

Fest.

And yet

As strong delusions have prevailed ere now.
Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin. I have heard of such : yourself
Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

Mich. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint
Through the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn amid the clouds afar ?

Par. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale ?
For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
Ages ago ; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest, so
Instinct with better light let in by death,
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
Dim memories, as now, when once more seems
The goal in sight again. All which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.

Fest. And who am I, to challenge and dispute
That clear belief ? I will divest all fear.

Mich. Then Aureole is God's commissary ! he shall
Be great and grand—and all for us !

Par. No, sweet !
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'Tis well ; but there our intercourse must end :
I never will be served by those I serve.

Fest. Look well to this ; here is a plague-spot, here,
Disguise it how you may ! 'Tis true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us ;
'Tis but a spot as yet : but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.
How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love ?
It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought ; I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be
That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval
Reward you ; put reward aside ; alone
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
None share your triumph : still you must retain —
Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows ; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause their own.
They should ward off fate's envy—the great gift,
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.
If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach !

Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both

To listen by my side—even I ! And you ?
Do you not feel this ? Say that you feel this !

Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly helps !
My course allures for its own sake, its sole
Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
Your sages say, " if human, therefore weak : "
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .
No matter ! I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own.
Would there were some real sacrifice to make !
Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
While I must be content with keeping mine.

Fest. But do not cut yourself from human weal !
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind
For no reward of theirs, unbound to them
By any tie ; nor do so, Aurcole ! No—
There are strange punishments for such. Give up
(Although no visible good flow thence) some part
Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
Say, say almost to God—" I have done all
For her, not for myself ! "

Par. And who but lately
Was to rejoice in my success like you ?
Whom should I love but both of you ?

Fest. I know not :
But know this, you, that 'tis no will of mine
You should abjure the lofty claims you make ;
And this the cause—I can no longer seek
To overlook the truth, that there would be
A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :
—A being knowing not what love is. Hear me !

You are endowed with faculties which bear
 Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
 To summon meaner spirits to do their will
 And gather round them at their need ; inspiring
 Such with a love themselves can never feel,
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
 I know not if you joy in this or no,
 Or ever dream that common men can live
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make
 Their heart's sole treasure : the affections seem
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste
 Or die : and this strange quality accords,
 I know not how, with you ; sits well upon
 That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
 An eating brand, a shame. I dare not judge you.
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
 There's no alternative—I own you one
 Of higher order, under other laws
 Than bind us ; therefore, curb not one bold glance !
 'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .

Mich. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast those hopes away,
 And stay with us ! An angel warns me, too,
 Man should be humble ; you are very proud :
 And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such !
 —Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,
 No slow defeat, but a complete success :
 You will find all you seek, and perish so !

Par. [*after a pause.*] Are these the barren firstfruits
 of my quest ?
 Is love like this the natural lot of all ?
 How many years of pain might one such hour
 O'erbalance ? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
 What shall I say, if not that I desire
 To justify your love ; and will, dear friends,
 In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
 See, the great moon ! and ere the mottled owls
 Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
 You acquiesce at last in all save this—

If I am like to compass what I seek
By the untried career I choose ; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul : for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first ; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labours and the precepts of old time,
I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness ; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blinds it, and makes all error : and, to know,
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us ; where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour : chance—for hitherto, your sage
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,
As little knows he what unlocks their fount.
And men have oft grown old among their books
To die case-hardened in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what long years
Of unremitted labour ne'er performed :
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last
To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,

The lowest as the highest ? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly ? See this soul of ours !
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
By age and waste, set free at last by death :
Why is it, flesh enthrals it or enthrones ?
What is this flesh we have to penetrate ?
Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange chance
Ruffles its current ; in unused conjuncture,
When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess or languor—oftenest death's approach,
Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life surrounded with all stirring things,
Unmoved ; and he goes mad : and from the wreck
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
Accloys the spirit ! We may not be doomed
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God,
But elevate the race at once ! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
See if we cannot beat thine angels yet !
Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad or lorn of hope ?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's,
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust ?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me ?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world

Apart from his, like those who set themselves
 To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
 And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
 Were only born to vanish in this life,
 Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,
 But chose to figure forth another world
 And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
 And all a dream ! Thus was life scorned ; but life
 Shall yet be crowned : twine amaranth ! I am priest !
 And all for yielding with a lively spirit
 A poor existence, parting with a youth
 Like those who squander every energy
 Convertible to good, on painted toys,
 Breath-bubbles, gilded dust ! And though I spurn
 All adventitious aims, from empty praise
 To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
 Important, and concerns himself for me,
 May know even these will follow with the rest—
 As in the steady rolling Maync, asleep
 Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
 My own affections, laid to rest awhile,
 Will waken purified, subdued alone
 By all I have achieved. Till then—till then . . .
 Ah, the time-wiling loitering of a page
 Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring
 The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
 The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
 Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types !
 See, see they look on me : I triumph now !
 But one thing, Festus, Michal ! I have told
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal : say—
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this ?

Fest. I do believe !

Mich. I ever did believe !

Par. Those words shall never fade from out my brain !
 This earnest of the end shall never fade !
 Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
 Two points in the adventure of the diver,

One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
 One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
 Festus, I plunge!

Fest. We wait you when you rise!

II.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE, *Constantinople; the House of a Greek conjurer.*

1521

PARACELSUS

Over the waters in the vaporous West
 The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
 Behind the arm of the city, which between,
 With all that length of domes and minarets,
 Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs
 Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.
 There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
 Possess my aching sight! 'Tis done at last.
 Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
 Have won me to this act! 'Tis as yon cloud
 Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a mountain-top
 And break upon a molehill. I have dared
 Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once
 The heights already reached, without regard
 To the extent above; fairly compute
 All I have clearly gained; for once excluding
 A brilliant future to supply and perfect
 All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes:
 And all because a fortune-teller wills
 His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much,
 Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,
 Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
 Make up the sum: and here, amid the scrawled

Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results !

A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many lands
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly massed as when acquired ; he was
Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinize the little gained : the whole
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
A whole life, and my life ! Nothing to do,
No problem for the fancy, but a life
Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this
Remembrancer set down concerning “ life ? ”
“ ‘ Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’ ”
It is the echo of time ; and he whose heart
Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
Was copied from a human tongue, can never
Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him
Till some one hour's experience shows what nothing,
It seemed, could clearer show ; and ever after,
An altered brow and eye and gait and speech
Attest that now he knows the adage true
‘ Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’ ”

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour
As well as any : now, let my time be !

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill,
'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance.

I cannot keep on the stretch ; 'tis no back-shrinking—
For let but some assurance beam, some close
To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
At any price, though closing it, I die.
Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true : " I shall not quit
His chamber till I know what I desire ! "
Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea ?

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once
Encountered, gathers strength by moments ! Rest !
Where has it kept so long ? this throbbing brow
To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease ! To dare let down
My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve
My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place,
My portion, my reward, even my failure,
Assigned, made sure for ever ! To lose myself
Among the common creatures of the world,
To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length !
Even in failure, rest ! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped that once !

What, sunk insensibly so deep ? Has all
Been undergone for this ? This the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal ? Had I gone
Slightly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes ; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
End things or mend them,—why, I could not choose
A humbler mood to wait for the event !
No, no, there needs not this ; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task ;
The rest is God's concern ; mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot

Has trod, unscathed, the temple-court so far
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power ; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them ; behold,
He bares his front : a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms !
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,
Both well ! What's failure or success to me ?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordained it ; there alone I spy,
No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.
Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vow,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was formed
To rear, should wither ; but foreseeing not
The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not ; yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,
If not love, say, like love : there was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg which the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise
And counsel and grave fears—where is he now

With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better. I am saved
The sad review of an ambitious youth
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
I have made life consist of one idea :
Ere that was master, up till that was born,
I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn
I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
And since that morn all life has been forgotten ;
All is one day, one only step between
The outset and the end : one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Through a career apparently adverse
To its existence : life, death, light and shadow,
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight :
A wondrous natural robe in which she went.
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
Into assured light in some branching mine
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—
And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;
I see the robe now—then I saw the form.

So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of land :
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too !
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens ; last
I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light
From its own putrefying depths alone.
Then, God was pledged to take me by the hand ;
Now, any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length :
God may take pleasure in confounding pride
By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
I am here, in short : so little have I paused
Throughout ! I never glanced behind to know
If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter,
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,
Plague beneath plague, the last turning the first
To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win
Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture
Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it
Indignant back, I might convince myself
My aims remained supreme and pure as ever !
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
That, though I sink, another may succeed ?
O God, the despicable heart of us !
Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject

Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;
At all events, once launched, to hold straight on :
For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
Full consummation ! As a man, you had
A certain share of strength ; and that is gone
Already in the getting these you boast.
Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
“ Great master, we are here indeed, dragged forth
To light ; this hast thou done : be glad ! Now, seek
The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting !

And yet 'tis much, surely 'tis very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrived with inexhaustible light ; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not !
And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?
Knowledge it seemed, and power, and recompense !
Was she who glided through my room of nights,
Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed
The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
God ! was I fighting sleep off for death's sake ?

God ! Thou art mind ! Unto the master-mind
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone !
All else I will endure ; if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
I bow me ; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will ;
I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die ;
And if no trace of my career remain
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
In these bright chambers level with the air,
See thou to it ! But if my spirit fail,
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,

Hast thou done well by me ? So do not thou !
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed !
Hold me before the frequency of thy seraphs
And say—" I crushed him, lest he should disturb
My law. Men must not know their strength : behold,
Weak and alone, how he had raised himself ! "

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,
Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost intend
To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour,
To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From thine own blinding crown, to smile, and guide
This puny hand and let the work so wrought
Be styled my work,—hear me ! I covet not
An influx of new power, an angel's soul :
It were no marvel then—but I have reached
Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a man !
Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith, but only one !
That I may cover with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain way
To mould them, and completing them, possess !

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,
And why dispute it now ? I'll not believe
But some undoubted warning long ere this
Had reached me : a fire-labrum was not deemed
Too much for the old founder of these walls.
Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous : yet, till late, my course
So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
Could find no place in it. True, I am worn ;
But who clothes summer, who is life itself ?
God, that created all things, can renew !
And then, though after-life to please me now
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders

Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
As bursts the flower from earth and root and stalk ?
What use were punishment, unless some sin
Be first detected ? let me know that first !
No man could ever offend as I have done . . .

[A voice from within.]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
Long ago, but all too low,
So that scarce a care it stirred
If the voice were real or no :
I heard it in my youth when first
The waters of my life outburst :
But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
That voice, still low but fatal-clear—
As if all poets, God ever meant
Should save the world, and therefore lent
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
To do his work, or lightly used
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
So, mourn cast off by him for ever,—
As if these leaned in airy ring
To take me ; this the song they sing.

“ Lost, lost ! yet come,
With our wan troop make thy home.
Come, come ! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee,
Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.
So sank we in those old years,
We who bid thee, come ! thou last
Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.
And altogether we, thy peers,
Will pardon ask for thee, the last
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
With those who watch but work no more,

- Who gaze on life but live no more.
 Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
 The message which our lips, too weak,
 Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
 Our fault : such trust, and all a dream !
 Yet we chose thee a birthplace
 Where the richness ran to flowers ;
 Couldst not sing one song for grace ?
 Not make one blossom man's and ours ?
 Must one more recreant to his race
 Die with unexerted powers,
 And join us, leaving as he found
 The world, he was to loosen, bound ?
 Anguish ! ever and for ever ;
 Still beginning, ending never !
 Yet, lost and last one, come !
 How couldst understand, alas,
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,
 As their shades did glance and pass
 Before thee, night and day ?
 Thou wast blind as we were dumb :
 Once more, therefore, come, O come !
 How shall we clothe, how arm the spirit
 Shall next thy post of life inherit—
 How guard him from thy speedy ruin ?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not save ! ”

APRILE enters

Ha, ha ! our king that wouldst be, here at last ?
 Art thou the poet who shall save the world ?
 Thy hand to mine ! Stay, fix thine eyes on mine !
 Thou wouldst be king ? Still fix thine eyes on mine !
Par. Ha, ha ! why crouchest not ? Am I not king ?

So torture is not wholly unavailing !
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair ?
 Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,
 Myself of after-time, my very self
 With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
 Who robes him in my robe and grasps my crown
 For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect ?
 I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
 That such might come, and thou didst hear the while !

Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ; my hair
 Is soft, nay silken soft : to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.
 Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,
 The siren's ! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained !
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest ?
 I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed
 In after-time ; that I should hear the earth
 Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise ;
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Par. Ah fiend, I know thee, I am not thy dupe !
 Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap
 The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,
 As if, except through me, thou hadst searched or striven !
 Ay, tell the world ! Degrade me, after all,
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

Apr. Nay, sing them to me ; I shall envy not :
 Thou shalt be king ! Sing thou, and I will sit
 Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
 To fill thy throne : but none shall ever know !
 Sing to me ; for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart-strings, as some crystal-shaft
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
 After long time : so thou reveal'st my soul.
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

Par. (His secret ! I shall get his secret—fool !)
I am he that aspired to KNOW : and thou ?

Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved !

Par. Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed

Apr. Thou deem'st

That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,
Born for thy fate—because I could not curb
My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment, but neglected all the means
Of realizing even the frailest joy,
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march
O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
Neglecting nought below for aught above,
Despising nothing and ensuring all—
Nor that I could (my time to come again)
Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.
Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.
I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

O ye who armed me at such cost,

How shall I look on all of ye

With your gifts even yet on me ?

Par. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature after all !
Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :
They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed
To echo one foreboding of my heart
So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands
With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair
Which turns to it as if they were akin :
And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
Nearly set free, so far they rise above
The painful fruitless striving of the brow
And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set
In slow despondency's eternal sigh !
Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause ?)
I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm !
Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be loved.
First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted
Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph
Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree
Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king
Regal for his white locks ; no youth who stands
Silent and very calm amid the throng,
His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
Until the tyrant pass ; no lawgiver,
No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils
Given by a god for love of her—too hard !
Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,
Would I express and clothe it in its right form,
Or blend with others struggling in one form,
Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
With a fit frame to execute its will—
Even unconsciously to work its will—
You should be moved no less beside some strong,
Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it
With its own splendour ! All this I would do ;
And I would say, this done, “ His sprites created,
God grants to each a sphere to be its world,
Appointed with the various objects needed
To satisfy its own peculiar want ;
So, I create a world for these my shapes
Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength ! ”
And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and wastes,
Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,
Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun,
And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone :

Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,
 Marts, theatres and wharfs—all filled with men,
 Men everywhere ! And this performed in turn,
 When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes
 And fears and hates and loves which moved the crowd,
 I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
 And I would speak ; no thought which ever stirred
 A human breast should be untold ; all passions,
 All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
 Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
 To the last comfort shutting the tired lids
 Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
 Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well :
 And this in language as the need should be,
 Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
 Now piled up in a grand array of words.
 This done, to perfect and consummate all,
 Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
 I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
 Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
 To be defined save in strange melodies.
 Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
 Having received all love bestowed on it,
 I would die : preserving so throughout my course
 God full on me, as I was full on men :
 He would approve my prayer, " I have gone through
 The loveliness of life ; create for me
 If not for men, or take me to thyself,
 Eternal, infinite love ! "

If thou hast ne'er

Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
 Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
 No king of mine.

Par. Ah me !

Apr. But, thou art here !
 Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
 Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss

Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should claim,
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, a second time : nay, listen !
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
We will be wise in time : what though our work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way ? 'Twere little praise
Did full resources wait on our goodwill
At every turn. Let all be as it is.
Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework. Had we means
Answering to our mind ! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon
My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the East ;
Who heeds them ? I can pass them. Serpents' scales,
And painted birds' down, furs and fishes' skins
Must help me ; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to : still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
" Had I green jars of malachite, this way
I'd range them : where those sea-shells glisten above,
Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set
The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag."
Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample
Of the prouder workmanship my own home boasts,
Some trifle little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection—with what joy
Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach !

Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
 Of the angels, one word of the fiat of God,
 To let my followers know what such things are !
 I would adventure nobly for their sakes :
 When nights were still, and still the moaning sea,
 And far away I could descry the land
 Whence I departed, whither I return,
 I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
 At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
 And fling my gains to them, worthless or true—
 “ Friends,” I would say, “ I went far, far for them,
 Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
 Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
 Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,
 Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
 Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
 In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,
 But happy plucking them at any price.
 To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
 They are scarce lovely : plait and wear them, you !
 And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed them,
 The stars that sparkled o’er them, night by night,
 The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew ! ”
 Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness
 Would win me honour. But not these alone
 Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants
 And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :
 The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
 A fear, but I’d be by him, saying better
 Than he his own heart’s language. I would live
 For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
 As a discoverer’s memory is attached
 To all he finds ; they should be mine henceforth,
 Imbued with me, though free to all before :
 For clay, once cast into my soul’s rich mine,
 Should come up crusted o’er with gems. Nor this
 Would need a meaner spirit, than the first ;
 Nay, ’twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed

In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit :
As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow
And comforts violets in their hermitage.
But, master, poet, who hast done all this,
How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me ?
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair ?
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
Resolve to single out one, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
In beauty, to the world, forgetting, so,
Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power ?
And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced
By memories and regrets and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell ? and did their eyes
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
Could tempt thee to forsake them ? Or when years
Had passed and still their love possessed thee wholly,
When from without some murmur startled thee
Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells
And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
And to that end, select some shape once more ?
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long
Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm ?

Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;
Say, I was tempted sorely : say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord !

Par. Clasp me not thus,
Aprile ! That the truth should reach me thus !
We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint !

Apr. My king ! and envious thoughts could outrage
thee ?

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
In thy success, as thou ! Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last ! What care
Through me or thee ! I feel thy breath. Why, tears ?
Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me ?

Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
To love ; and, merciful God, forgive us both !
We wake at length from weary dreams ; but both
Have slept in fairy-land : though dark and drear
Appears the world before us, we no less
Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.

I too have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake :
What penance canst devise for both of us ?

Apr. I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness ! Even
Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew : I speak,
And now I die. But I have seen thy face !
O poet, think of me, and sing of me !
But to have seen thee and to die so soon !

Par. Die not, Aprile ! We must never part.
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more ? Part ?
never !

Till thou the lover, know ; and I, the knower,
Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear !
We will accept our gains, and use them—now !
God, he will die upon my breast ! Aprile !

Apr. To speak but once, and die ! yet by his side.
Hush ! hush

Ha ! go you ever girt about
 With phantoms, powers ? I have created such,
 But these seem real as I.

Par. Whom can you see
 Through the accursed darkness ?

Apr. Stay ; I know,
 I know them : who should know them well as I ?
 White brows, lit up with glory ; poets all !

Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward !

Apr. Yes ; I see now. God is the perfect poet,
 Who in his person acts his own creations.
 Had you but told me this at first ! Hush ! hush !

Par. Live ! for my sake, because of my great sin,
 To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words
 And their deep import. Live ! 'tis not too late.
 I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
 Michal shall smile on you. Hear you ? Lean thus,
 And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one word
 Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile !

Apr. No, no. Crown me ? I am not one of you !
 'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

Par. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile ! Let me love !

I have attained, and now I may depart.

III.—PARACELSUS

SCENE, *Basil ; a chamber in the house of Paracelsus.*

1526

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

Par. Heap logs and let the blaze laugh out !

Fest. True, true !
 'Tis very fit all, time and chance and change

Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
By your long absence, should be cast away,
Forgotten in this glad unhopèd renewal
Of our affections.

Par. Oh, omit not aught
Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection : spare not that ! Only forget
The honours and the glories and what not,
It pleases you to tell profusely out.

Fest. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive :
The wondrous Paracelsus, life's dispenser,
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools
And courts, shall be no more than Aureole still,
Still Aureole and my friend as when we parted
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
As best I could the promptings of my spirit
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
Has won for you.

Par. Yes, yes. And Michal's face
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl ?

Fest. Just so.

Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
Though saintly, was not sad ; for she would sing
Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
Not dreaming you are near ? Her carols dropt
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
Sat conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves,
Much wondering notes so simple could divert
My mind from study. Those were happy days.
Respect all such as sing when all alone !

Fest. Scarcely alone : her children, you may guess,

Are wild beside her.

Par. Ah, those children quite
Unsettled the pure picture in my mind ;
A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct.
No change, no change ! Not but this added grace
May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood ;
But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since.
So, Michal—you have said she thinks of me ?

Fest. O very proud will Michal be of you !
Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering, shaping your presumed
Adventure, or devising its reward ;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
For it was strange how, even when most secure
In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all ; it seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—
How you would laugh should I recount them now !
I still predicted your return at last
With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop ; did one of which
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw restless boy !

Fest. . Oh, no : the sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon !
Can I forget the anxious voice which said

"Festus, have thoughts like these e'er shaped themselves

In other brains than mine ? have their possessors
Existed in like circumstance ? were they weak
As I, or ever constant from the first,
Despising youth's allurements and rejecting
As spider-films the shackles I endure ?
Is there hope for me ?"—and I answered gravely
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
For all your glorious . . .

Par. Glorious ? ay, this hair,
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine ! Recall
With all the said recallings, times when thus
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale
As now. Most glorious, are they not ?

Fest. Why—why—
Something must be subtracted from success
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,
You are changed, very changed ! 'Twere losing nothing
To look well to it : you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

Par. My friend ! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt :
You will best gain your point, by talking, not
Of me, but of yourself.

Fest. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children ? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair ;
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
His namesake. Sigh not ! 'tis too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life ;
You, who of old could never tame yourself

To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let out by death

Who blabs so oft the follies of this world :

And I am death's familiar, as you know.

I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,

Warped even from his go-cart to one end—

The living on princes' smiles, reflected from

A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick

He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed

All traces of God's finger out of him :

Then died, grown old. And just an hour before,

Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes,

He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice

Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors

God told him it was June ; and he knew well,

Without such telling, harebells grew in June ;

And all that kings could ever give or take

Would not be precious as those blooms to him.

Just so, allowing I am passing sage,

It seems to me much worthier argument

Why pansies,* eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize

From violets, eyes that dream — (your Michal's
choice)—

Than all fools find to wonder at in me

Or in my fortunes. And be very sure

I say this from no prurient restlessness,

No self-complacency, itching to turn,

Vary and view its pleasure from all points,

And, in this instance, willing other men

Should be at pains, demonstrate to itself

The realness of the very joy it tastes.

What should delight me like the news of friends

Whose memories were a solace to me oft,

As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight ?

Other than you had wasted thought on me

Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.

* *Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris.* DORN.

But there's no taming nor repressing hearts :
God knows I need such !—So, you heard me speak ?

Fest. Speak ? when ?

Par. When but this morning at my class ?
There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.
Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here ?—that 'tis part of my proud fate
To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths
As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
To my great reputation, and no small
Danger of Basil's benches long unused
To crack beneath such honour ?

Fest. I was there ;
I mingled with the throng : shall I avow
Small care was mine to listen ?—too intent
On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
A full corroboration of my hopes !
What can I learn about your powers ? but they
Know, care for nought beyond your actual state,
Your actual value ; yet they worship you,
Those various natures whom you sway as one !
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Par. Stop, o' God's name : the thing's by no means yet
Past remedy ! Shall I read this morning's labour
—At least in substance ? Nought so worth the gaining
As an apt scholar ! Thus then, with all due
Precision and emphasis—you, beside, are clearly
Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
The subject than your stool—allowed to be
A notable advantage.

Fest. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me !

Par. I laugh ? Ha, ha ! thank heaven,
I charge you, if 't be so ! for I forget
Much, and what laughter should be like. No less,
However, I forego that luxury
Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
True, laughter like my own must echo strangely

To thinking men ; a smile were better far ;
 So, make me smile ! If the exulting look
 You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long
 Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles are born
 Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's souls
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
 And in the earth a stage for altars only.

Never change, Festus : I say, never change !

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all !

Par. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
 —Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered words
 I have preserved. She told me she believed
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
 I then engaged in, I should meet success)
 And yet be wretched : now, she augured false.

Fest. Thank heaven ! but you spoke strangely : could
 I venture

To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
 Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find
 Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could move
 Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not, dear friend,
 That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
 Your lot was not my own !

Par. And this for ever !

For ever ! gull who may, they will be gulled !
 They will not look nor think ; 'tis nothing new
 In them : but surely he is not of them !
 My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—
 Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,
 Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye
 Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
 A weaker vision ; would remain serene,
 Though singular amid a gaping throng.
 I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,
 To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
 And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
 A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest

Past all dispute ! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
 I have vowed long ago my worshippers
 Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
 All further information, good or bad.
 Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
 Unless perchance the glance now searching me
 Be fixed much longer ; for it seems to spell
 Dimly the characters a simpler man
 Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books
 Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
 Remained unchanged in semblance ; nay, his brow
 Was hued with triumph : every spirit then
 Praising, *his* heart on flame the while :—a tale !
 Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?

Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
 Were raised supreme ?

Par. Good : I do well, most well !
 Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves
 With what 'tis past their power to comprehend ?
 I should not strive now : only, having nursed
 The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,
 One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
 Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
 Of shallow plausibilities alone ;
 One who, in youth found wise enough to choose
 The happiness his riper years approve,
 Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
 That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad
 And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
 His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him
 The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
 And warned the weak one in such tender words,
 Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—
 That oft their memory comforted that friend
 When it by right should have increased despair :
 —Having believed, I say, that this one man
 Could never lose the light thus from the first
 His portion—how should I refuse to grieve

At even my gain if it disturb our old
Relation, if it make me out more wise ?
Therefore, once more reminding him how well
He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That spoils his prophet's title. In plain words,
You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—
I have not been successful, and yet am
Most miserable ; 'tis said at last ; nor you
Give credit, lest you force me to concede
That common sense yet lives upon the world !

Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me ?

Par. You know, or—if you have been wise enough
To cleanse your memory of such matters—knew,
As far as words of mine could make it clear,
That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
Or plot or whatsoe'er it was ; rejoicing
Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
Sorrowing then only when mischance retarded
Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days !
Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
I have pursued this plan with all my strength ;
And having failed therein most signally,
Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
As all-excelling would have been the prize
Had fortune favoured me. I scarce have right
To vex your frank good spirit late so glad
In my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.
But mine is no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
My solitary luxury, my one friend :
Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend !

Not that he needs retain his aspect grave ;
 That answers not my purpose ; for 'tis like,
 Some sunny morning—Basil being drained
 Of its wise population, every corner
 Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
 Here Æcolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
 Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
 Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed
 And staring,—that the zany of the show,
 Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
 His trappings with a grace but seldom judged
 Expedient in such cases :—the grim smile
 That will go round ! Is it not therefore best
 To venture a rehearsal like the present
 In a small way ? Where are the signs I seek,
 The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
 Due to all quacks ? Why, this will never do !
Fest. These are foul vapours, Aureole ; nought beside !
 The effect of watching, study, weariness.
 Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
 Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
 Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
 These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
 'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble to me,
 To Michal's friend.

Par. I have said it, dearest Festus !
 For the manner, 'tis ungracious probably ;
 You may have it told in broken sobs, one day,
 And scalding tears, ere long : but I thought best
 To keep that off as long as possible.
 Do you wonder still ?

Fest. No ; it must oft fall out
 That one whose labour perfects any work,
 Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
 Of all men least can measure the extent
 Of what he has accomplished. He alone
 Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
 May clearly scan the little he effects :

But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Par. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last ! 'Tis so with all !
First, they set down all progress as a dream ;
And next, when he whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success !

Fest. Few doubtful steps ? when death retires before
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most, swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?
When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?
When . . .

Par. When and where, the devil, did you get
This notable news ?

Fest. Even from the common voice ;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Par. Folly ? Why not
To magic, pray ? You find a comfort doubtless
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings : once we were judged worth
The devil's tempting . . . I offend : forgive me,
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
Was fair enough as prophesyings go ;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main ; and hereupon

I pay due homage : you guessed long ago
(The prophet !) I should fail—and I have failed.

Fest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
Your youth have not been realized as yet ?
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto ?
Or that their innate . . .

Par. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little matter
Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools ;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn : I fail.
And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost ;
But there are times when patience proves at fault,
As now : this morning's strange encounter—you
Beside me once again ! you, whom I guessed
Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
No friend have I among the saints at peace,
To judge by any good their prayers effect :
I knew you would have helped me—why not he,
My strange competitor in enterprise,
Bound for the same end by another path,
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close ?
How goes it with Aprile ? Ah, they miss
Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven,
Our martyrs for the world's sake ; heaven shuts fast :
The poor mad poet is howling by this time !
Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,
I could not quite repress the varied feelings
This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent,
And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what
In my time was a gate) fronting the road
From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

Fest.

Trifle not :

Answer me, for my sake alone ! You smiled
Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
Yourself, might blot the else so bright result ;
Yet if your motives have continued pure,
Your will unfaltering, and in spite of this,
You have experienced a defeat, why then
I say not you would cheerfully withdraw
From contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—
But surely you would ne'ertheless withdraw.
You sought not fame nor gain nor even love,
No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat
Your very words : once satisfied that knowledge
Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
Yourself the first. But how is the event ?
You are defeated—and I find you here !

Par. As though " here " did not signify defeat !
I spoke not of my little labours here
But of the break-down of my general aims :
For you, aware of their extent and scope,
To look on these sage lecturings, approved
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse,
As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice. A professorship
At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained
Of life's delights to render me a match
For duties arduous as such post demands,—
Be it far from me to deny my power
To fill the petty circle lotted out
Of infinite space, or justify the host
Of honours thence accruing. So, take notice,
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to come :
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth
For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.

I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician,
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault ;
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope
Had promised him interminable years ;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth
With some undoubted relic—a sudary
Of the Virgin ; while another piebald knave
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,
Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the first gust
Of stench from the ingredients just alight
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
Not easily laid : and ere an hour the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
A day—and I was posting for my life,
Placarded through the town as one whose spite
Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
Of the doctor's nostrum which, well seconded
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
Hard by in the abbey—raised the prince to life ;
To the great reputation of the seer
Who, confident, expected all along
The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
Much largess from his highness to the monks—
And the vast solace of his loving people,
Whose general satisfaction to increase,
The prince was pleased no longer to defer
The burning of some dozen heretics
Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
Touching his sickness : last of all were joined
Ample directions to all loyal folk
To swell the complement by seizing me
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—endeavoured
To thwart these pious offices, obstruct

The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
Of further favours. This one case may serve
To give sufficient taste of many such,
So, let them pass. Those shelves support a pile
Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy ;
They authorize some honour ; ne'ertheless,
I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;
He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,
And him " I raised " (nay, read it) " from the dead."
I weary you, I see. I merely sought
To show, there's no great wonder after all
That, while I fill the class-room and attract
A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay ;
And therefore need not scruple to accept
The utmost they can offer, if I please :
For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
Of one like me, used up in serving her.
Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part
Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think ;
You mind the fables we have read together.

Fest. You do not think I comprehend a word.
The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath ;
But surely you must feel how vague and strange
These speeches sound.

Par. Well, then : you know my hopes ;
I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain ;
That truth is just as far from me as ever ;
That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow
On that account is idle, and further effort
To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing,
As useless : and all this was taught your friend

By the convincing good old-fashioned method
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

Fest. Dear Aureole, can it be my fears were just ?
God wills not . . .

Par. Now, 'tis this I most admire—
The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
And see the will in question charactered
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot
Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.
I know as much of any will of God
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
That plague him every way ; but there, of course,
Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,
Subdued but not convinced. I know as little
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
Better things in my youth. I simply know
I am no master here, but trained and beaten
Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
Until some further intimation reach me,
Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer
To view the whole thing as a task imposed
Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—
Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
A host of petty vile delights, undreamed of
Or spurned before ; such now supply the place
Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,
Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well your words, I own
It troubles me but little that your aims,
Vast in their dawning and most likely grown
Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater praise ;
Because they are too glorious to be gained,
You do not blindly cling to them and die ;
You fell, but have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you
In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer ;
And though too harsh and sudden is the change
To yield content as yet, still you pursue
The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy strewn.
'Tis well : and your reward, or soon or late,
Will come from him whom no man serves in vain.

Par. Ah, very fine ! For my part, I conceive
The very pausing from all further toil,
Which you find heinous, would become a seal
To the sincerity of all my deeds.
To be consistent I should die at once ;
I calculated on no after-life ;
Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
Here am I with as passionate regret
For youth and health and love so vainly lavished,
As if their preservation had been first
And foremost in my thoughts ; and this strange fact
Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
In rendering me the less averse to follow
A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—
You will not understand—but 'twas a man
With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,
With the same fervour and no more success,
Perishing in my sight ; who summoned me
As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
To serve my race at once ; to wait no longer
That God should interfere in my behalf,
But to distrust myself, put pride away,
And give my gains, imperfect as they were,

To men. I have not leisure to explain
How, since, a singular series of events
Has raised me to the station you behold,
Wherein I seem to turn to most account
The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive
Some feeble glimmering token that God views
And may approve my penance : therefore here
You find me, doing most good or least harm.
And if folks wonder much and profit little
'Tis not my fault ; only, I shall rejoice
When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
And the curtain falls : I must hold out till then.

Fest. Till when, dear Aureole ?

Par. Till I'm fairly thrust
From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
And even professors fall : should that arrive,
I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
We sin ; God's intimations rather fail
In clearness than in energy : 'twere well
Did they but indicate the course to take
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
Be spared a further sample. Here I stand,
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Fest. Be you but firm on that head ; long ere then
All I expect will come to pass, I trust :
The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
Meantime, I see small chance of such event :
They praise you here as one whose lore, already
Divulged, eclipses all the past can show,
But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
Are faint anticipations of a glory
About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
That he depart.

Par. This favour at their hands
I look for earlier than your view of things
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day,

Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
Mere novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous set
Who bitterly hate established schools, and help
The teacher that oppugns them, till he once
Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher
May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue
But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing,
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived development. Why swell the list ?
Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of serving it : remove all these, remains
A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture : still these few
Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted,
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Par. God grant it so !
I would make some amends : but if I fail,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my manner,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine : much to say, small skill to speak !
These old aims suffered not a looking-off
Though for an instant ; therefore, only when
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth
So dearly purchased—only then I found
Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself ;
That to possess was one thing—to display

Another. With renown first in my thoughts,
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it :
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour of so little use.
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

Par. A task, a task !

But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged
In the confessing vein ? Despite of all
My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,
Docility and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the task shall really be performed,
My inclination free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated task I quit.
In plain words, I am spoiled ; my life still tends
As first it tended ; I am broken and trained
To my old habits : they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling ends
Are proved impossible : no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when
Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter me
And send me back content to my dull round ?
How can I change this soul ?—this apparatus
Constructed solely for their purposes,
So well adapted to their every want,
To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;
This intricate machine whose most minute
And meanest motions have their charm to me
Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain
And I alone :—how can I change my soul ?
And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
Under that soul's dominion—used to care
For its bright master's cares and quite subdued

Its proper cravings—not to ail nor pine
So he but prosper—whither drag this poor
Tried patient body ? God ! how I essayed
To live like that mad poet, for a while,
To love alone ; and how I felt too warped
And twisted and deformed ! What should I do,
Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
To my old life and die as I began !
I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness ;
My nature cannot lose her first imprint ;
I still must hoard and heap and class all truths
With one ulterior purpose : I must know !
Would God translate me to his throne, believe
That I should only listen to his word
To further my own aim ! For other men,
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
And I were happy could I quench as they
This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
With beauty for itself alone : alas,
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights ;
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more.
Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,
I shall o'ertake the company and ride
Glittering as they !

Fest. I think I apprehend
What you would say : if you, in truth, design
To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed !

Par. My friend, my friend,
I tell, you listen ; I explain, perhaps
You understand : there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse ?

When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?
That is the crowning operation claimed
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places: 'twill be worth the while.

Fest. Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said
To call for this? I judged from your own words.

Par. Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch describes the ape
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely
You thither turn at once: or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late performed,
And you are puzzled much how that could be!
You find me here, half stupid and half mad;
It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these matters, much less undergo
Another's scrutiny; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you:
And the event is, you combine, contrast
And ponder on my foolish words as though
They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—
Here, loathsome with despair and hate and rage!
Is there no fear, no shrinking and no shame?
Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?
Must I go deeper? Ay or no?

Fest.

Dear friend . . .

Par. True: I am brutal—'tis a part of it;
The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter,
How should you know? Well then, you think it strange
I should profess to have failed utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return
To courses void of hope: and this, because
You know not what temptation is, nor how

'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.
 You are to understand that we who make
 Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end :
 There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
 Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace
 And gather by the wayside herbs and roots
 To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm :
 We are assailed to life's extremest verge.
 It will be well indeed if I return,
 A harmless busy fool, to my old ways !
 I would forget hints of another fate,
 Significant enough, which silent hours
 Have lately scared me with.

Fest. Another ! and what ?

Par. After all, Festus, you say well : I am
 A man yet : I need never humble me.
 I would have been—something, I know not what ;
 But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.
 There are worse portions than this one of mine.
 You say well !

Fest. Ah !

Par. And deeper degradation !
 If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
 If vanity should become the chosen food
 Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish
 To find its early aspirations true,
 Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—
 An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies ;
 Should make it proud to emulate, surpass
 Base natures in the practices which woke
 Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no !
 Utter damnation is reserved for hell !
 I had immortal feelings ; such shall never
 Be wholly quenched : no, no !

My friend, you wear
 A melancholy face, and certain 'tis
 There's little cheer in all this dismal work.
 But was it my desire to set abroad

Such memories and forebodings ? I foresaw
Where they would drive. 'Twere better we discuss
News from Lucerne or Zurich ; ask and tell
Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.

Fest. I have thought : trust me, this mood will pass
away !

I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.
These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption : to be mortal
Is to be plied with trials manifold.
Look round ! The obstacles which kept the rest
From your ambition, have been spurned by you ;
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them all,
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
Avails to awe save these delusions bred
From its own strength, its selfsame strength disguised,
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole ! Since
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts !
I know you.

Par. And I know you, dearest Festus !
And how you love unworthily ; and how
All admiration renders blind.

Fest. You hold
That admiration blinds ?

Par. Ay and alas !

Fest. Nought blinds you less than admiration, friend !
Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree ; from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.

I say, such love is never blind ; but rather
 Alive to every the minutest spot
 Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
 So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.
 Love broods on such : what then ? When first perceived,

Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
 To overflush those blemishes with all
 The glow of general goodness they disturb ?
 —To make those very defects an endless source
 Of new affection grown from hopes and fears ?
 And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
 Made even for much proved weak ? no shrinking-back
 Lest, since all love assimilates the soul
 To what it loves, it should at length become
 Almost a rival of its idol ? Trust me,
 If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
 To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits
 Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,
 Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause ;
 And least from those who hate, who most essay
 By contumely and scorn to blot the light
 Which forces entrance even to their hearts :
 For thence will our defender tear the veil
 And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
 The giant image of perfection, grown
 In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned
 In the untroubled presence of its eyes.
 True admiration blinds not ; nor am I
 So blind. I call your sin exceptional ;
 It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
 Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God !
 I speak of men ; to common men like me
 The weakness you reveal endears you more,
 Like the far traces of decay in suns.
 I bid you have good cheer !

Par. *Præclare ! Optime !*
 Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest

Instructing Paracelsus ! yet 'tis so.
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
 'Tis in the advance of individual minds
 That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
 Eventually to follow ; as the sea
 Waits ages in its bed 'till some one wave
 Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
 The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
 Over the strip of sand which could confine
 Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,
 Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
 And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
 If all my labours, failing of aught else,
 Suffice to make such inroad and procure
 A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;
 For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
 And a legitimate success, may be,
 I am not blind to my undoubted rank
 When classed with others : I precede my age :
 And whoso wills is very free to mount
 These labours as a platform whence his own
 May have a prosperous outset. But, alas !
 My followers—they are noisy as you heard ;
 But, for intelligence, the best of them
 So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
 And they extol, that I begin to doubt
 Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones
 Would not do better service than my arms
 Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
 Sooner before the old awkward batterings
 Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

Fest. I would supply that art, then, or withhold
 New arms until you teach their mystery.

Par. Content you, 'tis my wish ; I have recourse
 To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
 To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
 Can make those arms of any use to men.
 Of course they are for swaggering forth at once

Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield—
Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles !
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step !
A proper sight to scare the crows away !

Fest. Pity you choose not, then, some other method
Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
At length established in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these :
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners ; let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-time ;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect : sooner or later
You shall be all-revealed.

Par. The old dull question
In a new form ; no more. Thus : I possess
Two sorts of knowledge ; one,—vast, shadowy,
Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued :
The other consists of many secrets, caught
While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
Prime principles which may conduct to much :
These last I offer to my followers here.
Now, bid me chronicle the first of these,
My ancient study, and in effect you bid
Revert to the wild courses just abjured :
I must go find them scattered through the world.—
Then, for the principles, they are so simple
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound them
As any other—to-morrow at my class,
Or half a century hence embalmed in print.
For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to them
And acting on them ; and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent well :
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
For all their novelty and rugged setting.

I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
Serapion, Avicenna, Averroës,
Were blocks !

Fest. And that reminds me, I heard something
About your waywardness : you burned their books,
It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Par. And who said that ?

Fest. Some I met yesternight
With Æcolampadius. As you know, the purpose
Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives sent
For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
Apprised me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.

Par. Ah, I forgot : you went . . .

Fest. From Zurich with advices for the ear
Of Luther, now at Wittemburg—(you know,
I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
Basil and . . .

Par. I remember. Here's a case, now,
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention : pray, does Luther dream
His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine ? No, indeed :
His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was under
And heaven above them—points which chance or time
Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny !
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
Awhile ; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come : and next,
Reproachful wonder and inquiry : those
Who else had never stirred, are able now

To find rest for themselves, perhaps
 To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
 —As never will my wise class its instructor.
 And you saw Luther ?

Fest. 'Tis a wondrous soul !

Par. True : the so-heavy chain which galled mankind
 Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
 Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker
 Of our own project—we who long before
 Had burst our trammels but forgot the crowd,
 We should have taught, still groaned beneath the load :
 This he has done and nobly. Speed that may !
 Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
 What benefits mankind must glad me too :
 And men seem made, though not as I believed,
 For something better than the times produce.
 Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
 From Suabia have possessed, whom Munzer leads,
 And whom the duke, the landgrave and the elector
 Will calm in blood ! Well, well ; 'tis not my world !

Fest. Hark !

Par. 'Tis the melancholy wind astir
 Within the trees ; the embers too are grey :
 Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the casement : see,
 The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,
 Is blank and motionless : how peaceful sleep
 The tree-tops altogether ! Like an asp,
 The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

Par. Ay ; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree
 By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze :
 Those happy times will come again.

Par. Gone, gone,
 Those pleasant times ! Does not the moaning wind
 Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
 And bartered sleep for them ?

Fest. It is our trust

That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.

Par. Another world !
And why this world, this common world, to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come ? Man must be fed
With angels' food, forsooth ; and some few traces
Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
In a supreme contempt of all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks
Which constitute his essence, just as truly
As here and there a gem would constitute
The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.
But were it so—were man all mind—he gains
A station little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
Intelligence exists which casts our mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no :
Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity ;
These are its sign and note and character,
And these I have lost !—gone, shut from me for ever,
Like a dead friend safe from unkindness more !
See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
Diluted ; grey and clear without the stars ;
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if
Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
His hold ; and from the East, fuller and fuller
Day, like a mighty river, flowing in ;
But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.
Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant,
Half-down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves
All thick and glistening with diamond dew.
And you depart for Einsiedeln this day,
And we have spent all night in talk like this !
If you would have me better for your love,
Revert no more to these sad themes.

Fest.
(2,376)

One favour,
3 a

And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;
 Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
 My friend has changed so sorely. If this mood
 Shall pass away, if light once more arise
 Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
 To hope and trust again, and strive again,
 You will remember—not our love alone—
 But that my faith in God's desire that man
 Should trust on his support, (as I must think
 You trusted) is obscured and dim through you ;
 For you are thus, and this is no reward.
 Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole ?

IV.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE, *Colmar, in Alsatia ; an Inn.* 1528

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

Par. [*To JOHANNES OPORINUS, his secretary.*] *Sic itur
 ad astra !* Dear Von Visenburg
 Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralysed,
 And every honest soul that Basil holds
 Aghast ; and yet we live, as one may say,
 Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
 So true a value on his sorry carcass,
 And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
 We live ; and shall as surely start to-morrow
 For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy scathe
 To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
 A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
 I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good John—
 " Basil ; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
 Oppose the plague ! " Even so ? Do you too share

Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint through these,
Desist for these! They manage matters so
At Basil, 'tis like: but others may find means
To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes;
And, that done,—means to brand each slavish brow
So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That henceforth flattery shall not pucker it
Out of the furrow; there that stamp shall stay
To show the next they fawn on, what they are,
This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,
Dispatch, my trusty John; and what remains
To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night; we'll weather the storm at least: to-morrow
For Nuremburg! Now leave us; this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear:

[OPORINUS goes out.]

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,
I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last
May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
How very kind, my first best only friend!
Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me!
Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you shall live
Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,
And I—but let time show. Did you not wonder?
I sent to you because our compact weighed
Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
At Basil, which the gods confound!)—because
Once more I aspire. I call you to my side;
You come. You thought my message strange?

Fest.

So strange
That I must hope, indeed, your messenger

Has mingled his own fancies with the words
Purporting to be yours.

Par. He said no more,
'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave
Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,
'Tis true ! poor Paracelsus is exposed
At last ; a most egregious quack he proves :
And those he overreached must spit their hate
On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
Bare truth ; and at my bidding you come here
To speed me on my enterprise, as once
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend !

Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole ?

Par. Oh, for purpose,
There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine ; at least, if not precisely mine,
The case of men cast off by those they sought
To benefit.

Fest. They really cast you off ?
I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
Knowing his life's worth best ; and how the judge
The matter was referred to, saw no cause
To interfere, nor you to hide your full
Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother
His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
That Basil soon was made no place for you.

Par. The affair of Liechtenfels ? the shallowest fable,
The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence !
I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
Of better things to come—would pall and pass ;
And every word comes true. Saul is among
The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased
To play off the mere antics of my art,
Fantastic gambols leading to no end,

I got huge praise : but one can ne'er keep down
Our foolish nature's weakness. There they flocked,
Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,
Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !
I had a kindness for them, which was right ;
But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them ; I must needs begin
To teach them, not amaze them, “ to impart
The spirit which should instigate the search
Of truth,” just what you bade me ! I spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
Filed off—“ the sifted chaff of the sack,” I said,
Redoubling my endeavours to secure
The rest. When lo ! one man had tarried so long
Only to ascertain if I supported
This tenet of his, or that ; another loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judged ; this bland disciple
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most ;
That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong
And beaconed properly, would commend again
The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,
Though not their squeamish sons ; the other worthy
Discovered divers verses of St. John,
Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
The colic and what not. *Quid multa ?* The end
Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
From those in chief who, cap in hand, installed
The new professor scarce a year before ;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
Of which the example was some luckless wight

Whom my arrival had discomfited,
 But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
 To fill my chair and so efface the stain
 Basil had long incurred. I sought no better,
 Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
 And from my heart I wished them better suited
 And better served. Good night to Basil, then !
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
 The pleasure of a parting kick.

Fest.

You smile :

Despise them as they merit !

Par.

If I smile,

'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
 Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense,
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
 At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,
 The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
 Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
 —I would lay bare to you the human heart
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
 O, sages have discovered we are born
 For various ends—to love, to know : has ever
 One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
 Of a nature in us formed to hate ? To hate ?
 If that be our true object which evokes
 Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate !
 Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
 Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
 I had not the monopoly of fools,
 It seems, at Basil.

Fest.

But your plans, your plans !

I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole !

Par. Whether to sink beneath such ponderous shame,
 To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo

In silence and desist from further toil
 And so subside into a monument
 Of one their censure blasted ? or to bow
 Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
 My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
 To drop into the rank her wits assign me
 And live as they prescribe, and make that use
 Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,
 Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
 To practise the true posture for receiving
 The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance
 When they shall condescend to tutor me ?
 Then, one may feel resentment like a flame
 Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,
 And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
 And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood
 For a possession, ages : or one may mope
 Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse
 Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.
 But I,—now Festus shall divine !—but I
 Am merely setting out once more, embracing
 My earliest aims again ! What thinks he now ?

Fest. Your aims ? the aims ? to Know ? and where
 is found
 The early trust . . .

Par. Nay, not so fast ; I say,
 The aims—not the old means. You know they made me
 A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you know
 The when and the how : hardly those means again !
 Not but they had their beauty ; who should know
 Their passing beauty, if not I ? Still, dreams
 They were, so let them vanish, yet in beauty,
 If that may be. Stay : thus they pass in song !

[*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
 Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
 From out her hair : such balsam falls

Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
 From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
 Spent with the vast and howling main,
 To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
 Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
 Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;
 Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
 From closet long to quiet vowed,
 With moth and dropping arras hung,
 Mouldering her lute and books among,
 As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Mine, every word ! And on such pile shall die
 My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
 Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,
 Or why abjure them ? So, I made this rhyme
 That fitting dignity might be preserved ;
 No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs
 Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
 Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

Fest.

But, Aureole,

Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
 Did you know all ! I have travelled far, indeed,
 To learn your wishes. Be yourself again !
 For in this mood I recognize you less
 Than in the horrible despondency
 I witnessed last. You may account this, joy ;
 But rather let me gaze on that despair
 Than hear these incoherent words and see
 This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,
 I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?
 Aprile was a poet, I make songs—

'Tis the very augury of success I want !
 Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

Fest. Joyous ! and how ? and what remains for joy ?

You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable.

Par. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool !
Listen : my plan will please you not, 'tis like,
But you are little versed in the world's ways.
This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—
I will accept all helps ; all I despised
So rashly at the outset, equally
With early impulses, late years have quenched :
I have tried each way singly : now for both !
All helps ! no one sort shall exclude the rest.
I seek to know and to enjoy at once,
Not one without the other as before.
Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause
Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall not baulk me
Of the meanest earthliest sensualest delight
That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small. My soul
Can die then, nor be taunted—" what was gained ? "
Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure follow
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion
With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success.

Fest. Success !

Par. And wherefore not ? Why not prefer
Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark
As the thoughts they bred ? When I was best, my youth
Unwasted, seemed success not surest too ?
It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
I am a wanderer : I remember well
One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar
Flashed through the circling clouds ; you may conceive
My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,

But I had seen the city, and one such glance
 No darkness could obscure : nor shall the present—
 A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
 Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
 I will fight the battle out ; a little spent
 Perhaps, but still an able combatant.
 You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow ?
 But I can turn even weakness to account :
 Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
 To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
 The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
 Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.
 What should I do with age ? So, sickness lends
 An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all
 We boast of : mind is nothing but disease,
 And natural health is ignorance.

Fest.

I see

But one good symptom in this notable scheme.
 I feared your sudden journey had in view
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes ;
 'Tis not so : I am glad.

Par.

And if I please

To spit on them, to trample them, what then ?
 'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
 Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit,
 But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer
 Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
 Power to match power, my strength against their
 strength,
 And teach them their own game with their own arms—
 Why, be it so and let them take their chance !
 I am above them like a god, there's no
 Hiding the fact : what idle scruples, then,
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,
 Communicate it gently to the world,
 Instead of proving my supremacy,
 Taking my natural station o'er their head,

Then owning all the glory was a man's !
—And in my elevation man's would be.
But live and learn, though life's short, learning, hard !
And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
The penitent empiric, who set up
For somebody, but soon was taught his place ;
Now, but too happy to be let confess
His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
(*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)
Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
Good Pütter !

Fest. He who sneers thus, is a god !

Par. Ay, ay, laugh at me ! I am very glad
You are not gulled by all this swaggering ; you
Can see the root of the matter !—how I strive
To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to bury and hide
My degradation in its length and breadth ;
How the mean motives I would make you think
Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow
May influence me as being mortal still—
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe :
You find me out ! Yes, I had sent for you
To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus !
Laugh—you shall laugh at me !

Fest. The past, then, Aureole,
Proves nothing ? Is our interchange of love
Yet to begin ? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that ? For you,
Whate'er you say, there is no degradation ;
These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind,
Or wherefore this disorder ? You are vexed
As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they

Were troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls : not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep calm, though all night long the famished troops
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts.
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

Par. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend !

Fest. Nay, further ; the delights you fain would think
The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you. . . .

Par. Hush ! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at first
In our demand, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value ; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse :
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
Bitter contempt which urges us at first
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earned :
I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy ;
Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal
My need of linking also joy to knowledge :
So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly ; this will better explain—feel here !
Quick beating, is it not ?—a fire of the heart
To work off some way, this as well as any.
So, Festus sees me fairly launched ; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,
But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself

Open before him, and be soothed with pity ;
I hope, if he command hope, and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love. And Festus quits me
To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits : I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
And then dismiss the fool ; for night is come.
And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its prison ; my frame
Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the morn
Shall break on my pent room and dwindling lamp
And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores ;
When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
I must review my captured truth, sum up
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual bearings,
Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my scheme.
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
Proved worthless—which, in getting, yet had cost
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow !
I lapse back into youth, and take again
My fluttering pulse for evidence that God
Means good to me, will make my cause his own.
See ! I have cast off this remorseless care
Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
And my dim chamber has become a tent,
Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
Why do you start ? I say, she listening here,
(For yonder—Würzburg through the orchard-bough !)
Motions as though such ardent words should find
No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,

But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
 With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while !
 Ha, ha !

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to reap
 No unreal joy from this your present course,
 But rather . . .

Par. Death ! To die ! I owe that much
 To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
 To live contented after such a fall,
 To thrive and fatten after such reverse !
 The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
 My time.

Fest. And you have never mused and said,
 " I had a noble purpose, and the strength
 To compass it ; but I have stopped half-way,
 And wrongly given the firstfruits of my toil
 To objects little worthy of the gift.
 Why linger round them still ? why clench my fault ?
 Why seek for consolation in defeat,
 In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
 From ugliness ? why seek to make the most
 Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
 With mighty effort to redeem the past
 And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
 To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
 At their fit destination and my own ? "

You have never pondered thus ?

Par. Have I, you ask ?
 Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
 Would some such airy project visit me :
 But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
 The same thing in a tale, a parable ?
 You and I, wandering over the world wide,
 Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.
 Just as we cry, " No human voice before
 Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks ! "
 —Their querulous echo startles us ; we turn :
 What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea ?

Some characters remain, too ! While we read,
The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last
Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record ; and my voice, the wind's.

[*He sings.*

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave,
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
A gallant armament :
Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
To bear the playful billows' game :
So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,
But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar ;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent

Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
And with light and perfume, music too :
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky :
“ Avoid it,” cried our pilot, “ check
The shout, restrain the eager eye ! ”
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh ;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck !
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !
What laughter all the distance stirs !
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders !
“ Our isles are just at hand,” they cried,
“ Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping ;
Our temple-gates are opened wide,
Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
For these majestic forms ”—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,

Which had received our precious freight :

Yet we called out—" Depart !

Our gifts, once given, must here abide.

Our work is done ; we have no heart
To mar our work,"—we cried.

Fest. In truth ?

Par. Nay, wait : all this in tracings faint
On rugged stones strewn here and there, but piled
In order once : then follows—mark what follows !
" The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
To their first fault, and withered in their pride."

Fest. Come back then, Aureole ; as you fear God,
come !

This is foul sin ; come back ! Renounce the past,
Forswear the future ; look for joy no more
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,
And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy.
Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole !

Par. No way, no way ! it would not turn to good.
A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—
'Tis well for him ; but when a sinful man,
Envyng such slumber, may desire to put
His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there ? Our sires knew well
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)
The fitting course for such ; dark cells, dim lamps,
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm :
No mossy pillow blue with violets !

Fest. I see no symptom of these absolute
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
This verse-making can purge you well enough
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still : the lusts you fear, will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more !
Say but the word !

Par. No, no ; those lusts forbid :
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye

Beside you ; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
 Between them and their prey ; let some fool style me
 Or king or quack, it matters not, and try
 Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat !
 No, no ! learn better and look deeper, Festus !
 If you knew how a devil sneers within me
 While you are talking now of this, now that,
 As though we differed scarcely save in trifles !

Fest. Do we so differ ? True, change must proceed,
 Whether for good or ill ; keep from me, which !
 Do not confide all secrets : I was born
 To hope, and you . . .

Par. To trust : you know the fruits !

Fest. Listen : I do believe, what you call trust
 Was self-delusion at the best : for, see !
 So long as God would kindly pioneer
 A path for you, and screen you from the world,
 Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
 Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
 Of your engagement in his service—yield you
 A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,
 And turn your slave—you were content to say
 Most courtly praises ! What is it, at last,
 But selfishness without example ? None
 Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
 Remained implied in it ; but now you fail,
 And we, who prate about that will, are fools !
 In short, God's service is established here
 As he determines fit, and not your way,
 And this you cannot brook. Such discontent
 Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once !
 Affirm an absolute right to have and use
 Your energies ; as though the rivers should say—
 " We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do
 With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,
 Sleeping in lazy pools ? " Set up that plea,
 That will be bold at least !

Par.

'Tis like enough.

The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
The East produces : lo, the master nods,
And they raise terraces and garden-grounds
In one night's space ; and, this done, straight begin
Another century's sleep, to the great praise
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
Wake them again. I am of different mould.
I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him,
And done him service past my narrow bond,
And thus I get rewarded for my pains !
Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding
God's glory otherwise ; this is alone
The sphere of its increase, as far as men
Increase it ; why, then, look beyond this sphere ?
We are his glory ; and if we be glorious,
Is not the thing achieved ?

Fest. Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours ? Though years have changed
you much.

And you have left your first love, and retain
Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
And who shall call your course without reward ?
For, wherefore this repining at defeat
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes ?
I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
And what success attends me ?—simply talk
Of passion, weakness and remorse ; in short,
Anything but the naked truth—you choose
This so-despised career, and cheaply hold
My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return !

Par. And quickly. Oporinus
Has pilfered half my secrets by this time :
And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
I know not how ; not even the wine-cup soothes
My brain to-night . . .

Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus ?
 No flattery ! One like you needs not be told
 We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.
 Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts,
 Me and my cant, each petty subterfuge,
 My rhymes and all this frothy shower of words,
 My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust
 Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair
 Wrap the sound flesh ?—so, see you flatter not !
 Even God flatters : but my friend, at least,
 Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
 Against all further insult, hate and wrong
 From puny foes ; my one friend's scorn shall brand me ;
 No fear of sinking deeper !

Fest.

No, dear Aureole !

No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully.
 There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
 By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
 So infinitely low beside your mighty
 Majestic spirit !—even I can see
 You own some higher law than ours which call
 Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength.
 But I have only these, such as they are,
 To guide me ; and I blame you where they bid,
 Only so long as blaming promises
 To win peace for your soul : the more, that sorrow
 Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
 So that I faint not under my distress.
 But wherefore should I scruple to avow
 In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
 Your fate to me is most inexplicable ?
 And should you perish without recompense
 And satisfaction yet—too hastily
 I have relied on love : you may have sinned,
 But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
 As I would have God deal with fragile men
 In the end—I say that you will triumph yet !

Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus ?—'tis because

You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours !
Well thought on : never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all : these miscreants dared
Insult me—me she loved :—so, grieve her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve her now.

Par. Michal is dead ! pray Christ we do not craze !

Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus !
Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
I cannot bear those eyes.

Par. Nay, really dead ?

Fest. 'Tis scarce a month.

Par. Stone dead !—then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave ; but a far better secret.
Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth : I have thought much of it :
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Fest. Aureole !

Par. Nay, do not laugh ; there is a reason
For what I say : I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words ;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Fest. But not on this account alone ? you surely,
—Aureole, you have believed this all along ?

Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away !
Have your will, rabble ! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport !—Behold !

V.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE, *Salzburg ; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541

FESTUS, PARACELSUS

Fest. No change ! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly : yet no change !
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself ;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead :
He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole !
The days are gone, are gone ! How grand thou wast !
And now not one of those who struck thee down—
Poor glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
Another night, and yet no change ! 'Tis much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands ; 'tis much : but he will sure
Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more—but only once ! His hollow cheek
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man : my brain swam, my throat swelled,
And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
Resolved to live, to lose no faculty ;

Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
Until they bore him to this stifling cell :
When straight his features fell, an hour made white
The flushed face, and relaxed the quivering limb,
Only the eye remained intense awhile
As though it recognized the tomb-like place,
And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here !

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
Her bravest champion with his well-won prize—
Her best achievement, her sublime amends
For countless generations fleeting fast
And followed by no trace ;—the creature-god
She instances when angels would dispute
The title of her brood to rank with them.
Angels, this is our angel ! Those bright forms
We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
Are human, but not his ; those are but men
Whom other men press round and kneel before ;
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind ;
Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomps and glories : see it here !
Behold earth's paragon ! Now, raise thee, clay !
God ! Thou art love ! I build my faith on that !
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God ! what shall we say ?
How has he sinned ? How else should he have done ?
Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As half forget awhile its proper end.
Dost thou well, Lord ? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side—
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth ? Hadst thou but granted him
Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—

Save him, dear God ; it will be like thee : bathe him
In light and life ! Thou art not made like us ;
We should be wroth in such a case ; but thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts
Which come unsought and will not pass away !
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy ;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love.
But what am I ? Thou madest him and knowest
How he was fashioned. I could never err
That way : the quiet place beside thy feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts :
But he—thou shouldst have favoured him as well !
Ah ! he wakens ! Aureole, I am here ! 'tis Festus !
I cast away all wishes save one wish—
Let him but know me, only speak to me !
He mutters ; louder and louder ; any other
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look !
Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast ?
Misery, that he should fix me with his eye,
Quick talking to some other all the while !
If he would husband this wild vehemence
Which frustrates its intent !—I heard, I know
I heard my name amid those rapid words.
Oh, he will know me yet ! Could I divert
This current, lead it somehow gently back
Into the channels of the past !—His eye
Brighter than ever ! It must recognize me !

I am Erasmus : I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are **your** students, noble master : leave
This wretched cell, what business have you here ?
Our class awaits you ; come to us once more !

(O agony ! the utmost I can do
Touches him not ; how else arrest his ear ?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him.
Better be mute and see what God shall send.

Par. Stay, stay with me !

Fest. I will ; I am come here.
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old ;
Festus, you know, you must know !

Par. Festus ! Where's
Aprile, then ? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night ? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O well enough ! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know !

Fest. Festus, your Festus !

Par. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know ?
I try ; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold !

Fest. My hand, see !

Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile !
We get so near—so very, very near !
'Tis an old tale : Jove strikes the Titans down
Not when they set about their mountain-piling
But when another rock would crown the work.
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder : all old tales !

Fest. And what are these to you ?

Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well ; most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil and drop away by flakes !
Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail !
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,

One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn !
You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,
Who will believe 'twas you that held me back ?
Listen : there's shame and hissing and contempt,
And none but laughs who names me, none but spits
Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me !
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
In silence and despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair ?
Ha, ha ! why, they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
Madly upon a work beyond his wits ;
Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
So, pick and choose among them all, accursed !
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends !
No, no ; I am the first and last, I think.

Fest. Dear friend, who are accursed ? who has
done . . .

Par. What have I done ? Fiends dare ask that ?
or you,

Brave men ? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
By the others ! What had you to do, sage peers ?
Here stand my rivals ; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me : all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow.
Only observe : why, fiends may learn from them !
How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain ; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost ; they too hanging the while

About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me ! Grey crew,
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate ? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each prince ?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned
As we ! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect,
Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay speak
The tale, old man ! We met there face to face :
I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule :
Look to my brow ! Have I redeemed my pledge ?

Fest. Peace, peace ; ah, see !

Par.

Oh, emptiness of fame !

Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars !
—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,
But stand no longer ? What a warm light life
After the shade ! In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours !
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me : oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
While I remember that quaint dance ; and thus
I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
Soft as an ermine's winter coat !

Fest.

A light

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,
As in the angry and tumultuous West

A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.
 These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
 So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
 The past to stand between it and its fate.
 Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here !

Par. Cruel ! I seek her now—I kneel—I shriek—
 I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades ;
 And she is gone ; sweet human love is gone !
 'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
 Reveal themselves to you ; they sit all day
 Beside you, and lie down at night by you
 Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
 And all at once they leave you and you know them !
 We are so fooled, so cheated ! Why, even now
 I am not too secure against foul play ;
 The shadows deepen and the walls contract :
 No doubt some treachery is going on.
 'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile ?
 Have they left us in the lurch ? This murky loath-
 some

Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the hall
 In the golden city ! Keep by me, Aprile !
 There is a hand groping amid the blackness
 To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
 Poet ? Hold on me for your life ! If once
 They pull you !—Hold !

'Tis but a dream—no more !

I have you still ; the sun comes out again ;
 Let us be happy : all will yet go well !
 Let us confer : is it not like, Aprile,
 That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
 The value of my labours ascertained,
 Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
 But after glideth glassy to the sea,
 So, full content shall henceforth be my lot ?
 What think you, poet ? Louder ! Your clear voice
 Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
 How could I still remain on earth, should God

Grant me the great approval which I seek ?
I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
But men would murmur, and with cause enough ;
For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut from them,
I drank thus unespied ; that they live on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and weariness,
While I am calm ; help being vouchsafed to me,
And hid from them.—'Twere best consider that !
You reason well, Aprile ; but at least
Let me know this, and die ! Is this too much ?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die !
If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please !
We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bare my heart to thee ?
I know thy mercy ; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art good,
And I should be content. Yet—yet first show
I have done wrong in daring ! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
Which fed my youth ! Only one hour of that
With thee to help—O what should bar me then !

Lost, lost ! Thus things are ordered here ! God's
creatures,
And yet he takes no pride in us !—none, none !
Truly there needs another life to come !
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone ! Small time remains,
And much to do : I must have fruit, must reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through ; while I have laboured
It has decayed ; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast :
A sad thought, a sad fate ! How very full
Of wormword 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns and all is at the best,
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint
And die for want of a wood-piler's help !
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well, well—
Let men catch every word, let them lose nought
Of what I say ; something may yet be done.

They are ruins ! Trust me who am one of you !
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane : the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the moon,
Could I but rear them up once more—but that
May never be, so leave them ! Trust me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own ?
Trust me, they are but ruins ! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed ! Yet were I not prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is :
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what ? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once ? you curse me ? Why men, men,
I am not formed for it ! Those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me,

Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
 The horrible scorn ! You thought I could support it,
 But now you see what silly fragile creature
 Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
 Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
 From hate like this. Let me but totter back !
 Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
 Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
 Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.
 Listen, Aprile ! I am very calm :
 Be not deceived, there is no passion here
 Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing :
 I am calm : I will exterminate the race !
 Enough of that : 'tis said and it shall be.
 And now be merry : safe and sound am I
 Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.
 And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile !

Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,
 Aureole ? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
 Is gone, and you alone are left me now,
 And even you forget me. Take my hand—
 Lean on me thus. Do you not know me, Aureole ?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last ?
 As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise ;
 But you believe I shall go through with it :
 'Tis like you, and I thank you. Thank him for me,
 Dear Michal ! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
 Flames in the sunset ; all its figures quaint
 Gay in the glancing light : you might conceive them
 A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
 Bound for their own land where redemption dawns.

Fest. Not that blest time—not our youth's time, dear
 God !

Par. Ha—stay ! true, I forget—all is done since,
 And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,
 How calm, how well ! yes, it is true, all true ;
 All quackery ; all deceit ; myself can laugh
 The first at it, if you desire : but still

You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,
Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most approved ?
My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
Dear Festus ! I will kneel if you require me,
Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will :
I give the fight up : let there be an end,
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God.
But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
But where such graves are thickest ; let it look
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
So that the peasant at his brother's bed
May tread upon my own and know it not ;
And we shall all be equal at the last,
Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,
Nor gifted : lay me thus, then say, " He lived
Too much advanced before his brother men ;
They kept him still in front : 'twas for their good
But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
That he should tell God he had never ranked
With men : so, here at least he is a man."

Fest. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear spirit,
Unto his breast, be sure ! and here on earth
Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever.
Sun ! all the heaven is glad for thee : what care
If lower mountains light their snowy phares
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
The source of day ? Their theft shall be their bale :
For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones

And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
The thinker, the explorer, the creator !
Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well
The winding-sheet of subterraneous fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.
Behold thy might in me ! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august. I recognize thee first ;
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest.

Par. Festus !

Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God !
I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
Reward ! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever. There are two of us.

Par. Dear Festus !

Fest. Here, dear Aureole ! ever by you !

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on !
Some story, anything—only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on ! ay, leaning so !

Fest. Thus the Mayne glideth

Where my Love abideth.

Sleep's no softer ; it proceeds

On through lawns, on through meads,

On and on, whate'er befall,

Meandering and musical,

Though the niggard pasturage

Bears not on its shaven ledge

Aught but weeds and waving grasses

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To view the river as it passes,
 Save here and there a scanty patch
 Of primroses too faint to catch
 A weary bee.

Par. More, more ; say on !

Fest. And scarce it pushes
 Its gentle way through strangling rushes,
 Where the glossy kingfisher
 Flutters when noon-heats are near,
 Glad the shelving banks to shun,
 Red and steaming in the sun,
 Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
 Burrows, and the speckled stoat ;
 Where the quick sandpipers flit
 In and out the marl and grit
 That seems to breed them, brown as they :
 Nought disturbs its quiet way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Par. My heart ! they loose my heart, those simple words ;

Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch :
 Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
 Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
 What were you doing when your voice broke through
 A chaos of ugly images ? You, indeed !
 Are you alone here ?

Fest. All alone : you know me ?

This cell ?

Par. An unexceptionable vault :
 Good brick and stone : the bats kept out, the rats
 Kept in : a snug nook : how should I mistake it ?

Fest. But wherefore am I here ?

Par. Ah, well remembered !
 Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus !
 'Tis like me : here I trifle while time fleets,

And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.
 You are here to be instructed. I will tell
 God's message ; but I have so much to say,
 I fear to leave half out. All is confused
 No doubt ; but doubtless you will learn in time.
 He would not else have brought you here : no doubt
 I shall see clearer soon.

Fest. Tell me but this—

You are not in despair ?

Par. I ? and for what ?

Fest. Alas, alas ! he knows not, as I feared !

Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest
 Dear searching face ?

Fest. How feel you, Aureole ?

Par. Well :

Well. 'Tis a strange thing : I am dying, Festus,
 And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
 I first perceive how great the whirl has been.
 I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
 Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
 A partner of its motion and mixed up
 With its career. The hurricane is spent,
 And the good boat speeds through the brightening
 weather ;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below ?
 The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn
 With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore ;
 And now some islet, loosened from the land,
 Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean ;
 And now the air is full of upturned canes,
 Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
 Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
 All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
 Drifts by me ; I am young, old, happy, sad,
 Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
 And all at once : that is, those past conditions
 Float back at once on me. If I select
 Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but

To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on and nothing more,
Indifferent and amused but nothing more.
And this is death : I understand it all.
New being waits me ; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein ;
Which last is Death's affair ; and while I speak,
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power ; and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell ;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die like me.

Fest. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear.

Par. You wonder it engages me just now ?
In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me ?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain ? 'Tis a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last view.
I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still, it is like, some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose ;
Did I not tell you something of it, Festus ?
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me ; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice
Complete with its old tones : that little laugh
Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
As though one stooped above his head to whom
He looked for confirmation and approval,

Where was it gone so long, so well preserved ?
Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares ; 'tis many a year
Since I remarked it last : and this in him,
But now a ghastly wreck !)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity ?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose, the true purpose : that is it !
How could I fail to apprehend ! You here,
I thus ! But no more trifling : I see all,
I know all : my last mission shall be done
If strength suffice. No trifling ! Stay ; this posture
Hardly befits one thus about to speak :
I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild ?
You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help ; no help ;
Not even your hand. So ! there, I stand once more !
Speak from a couch ? I never lectured thus.
My gown—the scarlet lined with fur ; now put
The chain about my neck ; my signet-ring
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so ;
Last, my good sword ; ah, trusty Azoth, leapest
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time ?
This couch shall be my throne : I bid these walls
Be consecrate, this wretched cell become
A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me.
Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Fest. I am dumb with wonder.

Par. Listen, therefore, Festus !
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus ; very happy.

Fest. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus !
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin ?

Par. Ay, pardoned : yet why pardoned ?

Fest. 'Tis God's praise
That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Par. Have lived !

We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,
And in effect need mercy, for I strove
To do that very thing ; but, do your best
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
Pardon from him, because of praise denied—
Who calls me to himself to exalt himself ?
He might laugh as I laugh !

Fest. But all comes
To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns them not ;
They are no use that way : they should lie down
Content as God has made them, nor go mad
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Par. No, no ; mistake me not ; let me not work
More harm than I have worked ! This is my case :
If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
No offering, if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
If I appear the better to love God
For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—
Be not deceived ! It may be surely thus
With me, while higher prizes still await
The mortal persevering to the end.
Beside I am not all so valueless :
I have been something, though too soon I left
Following the instincts of that happy time.

Fest. What happy time ? For God's sake, for man's
sake,

What time was happy ? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time ?

Par. When but the time I vowed myself to man ?

Fest. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable !

Par. Yes, it was in me ; I was born for it—

I, Paracelsus : it was mine by right.
Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world ;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
For fit delights to stay its longings vast ;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared thus frame
Hungry for joy ; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs :—doubtless a strong soul,
Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestic !
But this was born in me ; I was made so ;
Thus much time saved : the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me ; thus I entered on my course.
You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble ; just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
Light on a darkling race ; save for that doubt,
I stood at first where all aspire at last

To stand : the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift
And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes ; where dwells enjoyment there is he :
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face ;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanoes come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.
Then all is still ; earth is a wintry clod :
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;

Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life : whose attributes had here and there
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant
To be united in some wondrous whole,
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
Convergent in the faculties of man.
Power—neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used
At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear :
Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
Strengthened by love : love—not serenely pure,
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;
Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
And blind, oft failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust :—
Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last. So far the seal
Is put on life ; one stage of being complete,

One scheme wound up : and from the grand result
A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth ; man, once descried, imprints for ever
His presence on all lifeless things : the winds
Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
Never a senseless gust now man is born.
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
A secret they assemble to discuss
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head : no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.
The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn,
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :
—And this to fill us with regard for man,
With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place,
For these things tend still upward, progress is
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows : when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,

Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy.
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? Oh long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched
stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
Then shall his long triumphant march begin,
Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him.
When all the race is perfected alike
As man, that is; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far:
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
Such was my task, and I was born to it—

Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated thus ;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's ; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto.
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf ; a strength
Denied that might avail him. I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed : I gazed on power till I grew blind.
Power ; I could not take my eyes from that :
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign and note and character of man.
I saw no use in the past : only a scene
Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand all-sufficient even now,
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring :
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
Of mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from man

What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth : the present for thee
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out : nor on thee yet
Shall burst the future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven :
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope and fear and love shall keep thee man !
All this was hid from me : as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved ; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentrated strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair ? The power I sought for man, seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise ;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there !
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error ; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution ; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much more love ;
Love still too straitened in his present means,
And earnest for new power to set it free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,

And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere : and why ?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success ; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts ;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly ; and shape forth a third
And better-tempered spirit, warned by both :
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt ;
'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me :
But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp

Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.
You understand me ? I have said enough ?

Fest. Now die, dear Aureole !

Par. Festus, let my hand—
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend !
Aprile ! Hand in hand with you, Aprile !

Fest. And this was Paracelsus !

STRAFFORD

PERSONS

CHARLES I.

Earl of HOLLAND

Lord SAVILE

Sir HENRY VANE

WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD

JOHN PYM

JOHN HAMPDEN

The younger VANE

DENZIL HOLLIS

BENJAMIN RUDYARD

NATHANIEL FIENNES

Earl of LOUDON

MAXWELL, Usher of the Black Rod

BALFOUR, Constable of the Tower

A Puritan

Queen HENRIETTA

LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford,
Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc. Two of Strafford's children.

STRAFFORD

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A House near Whitehall.*—HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, the younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES and many of the Presbyterian Party : LOUDON and other Scots Commissioners

Vane. I say, if he be here—

Rud. (And he is here !)—

Hol. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us ! Rudyard ! Henry Vane !
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate !
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still !

Vane. You say so, Hollis ? Well, I must be still.
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence should suspend
England's combined endeavour : little need
To name him !

Rud. For you are his brother, Hollis !

Hamp. Shame on you, Rudyard ! time to tell him
that,
When he forgets the Mother of us all.

Rud. Do I forget her ?

Hamp. You talk idle hate
Against her foe : is that so strange a thing ?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs ?

A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went :
But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . . .

Rud. Be you as still as David !

Fien. Here's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us !

Rud. Let's hope for news of them now he returns—
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought !
—But I'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now, by Heaven
They may be cool who can, silent who will—
Some have a gift that way ! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm
Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woeful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be,—
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out !)—in aught he feared
To venture on before ; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death—
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villainies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure
—If he dies under it, what harm ? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear :—how all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood too,
—Can I be still ?

Hamp. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now ! The year he left us,

The People in full Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King ;
And now, he'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause : England is here !

Hamp. And who despairs of England ?

Rud. That do I,

If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed for back again. I say,
I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this—
Which all true men say after me, not loud
But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer !
This King, who treads our England underfoot,
Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage ; friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
Some voice to ask, " Why shrink ? Am I not by ? "
Now, one whom England loved for serving her,
Found in his heart to say, " I know where best
The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
Upon me when you trample." Witness, you !
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.
But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane ! 'Tis well said, Vane !

Vane. Who has not so forgotten Runnymede !—

Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane ! Go on !

Vane. There are some little signs of late she knows
The ground no place for her. She glances round,
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
On other service : what if she arise ?
No ! the King beckons, and beside him stands

The same bad man once more, with the same smile
And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,
Or catch at us and rise ?

Voices.

The Renegade !

Haman ! Ahithophel !

Hamp. Gentlemen of the North,
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well :
Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.

Vane. Hampden !

Fien.

Stay, Vane !

Lou.

Be just and patient, Vane !

Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon ! you
Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back it ; you are free in Scotland still :
While we are brothers, hope's for England yet.
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes ? to quench
This last of hopes ? that he brings war with him ?
Know you the man's self ? what he dares ?

Lou.

We know,

All know—'tis nothing new.

Vane.

And what's new, then,

In calling for his life ? Why, Pym himself—
You must have heard—ere Wentworth dropped our
cause

He would see Pym first ; there were many more
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
But for these Wentworth cared not ; only, Pym
He would see—Pym and he were sworn, 'tis said,
To live and die together ; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument
Lost nothing on his lips ; he'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track ; they two combined
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out ;

One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all :
 " You leave us, Wentworth ! while your head is on,
 I'll not leave you."

Hamp. Has he left Wentworth, then ?
 Has England lost him ? Will you let him speak,
 Or put your crude surmises in his mouth ?
 Away with this ! Will you have Pym or Vane ?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival ! Pym shall speak.

Hamp. Meanwhile
 Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
 From Edinburgh : our last hope, as Vane says,
 Is in the stand it makes. Loudon !

Vane. No, no !
 Silent I can be : not indifferent !

Hamp. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare
 His anger, cast not England quite away
 In this her visitation !

A Puritan. Seven years long
 The Midianite drove Israel into dens
 And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

PYM enters

Even Gideon !

Pym. Wentworth's come : nor sickness, care,
 The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
 More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,
 Could keep him from the King. He has not reached
 Whitehall : they've hurried up a Council there
 To lose no time and find him work enough.
 Where's Loudon ? your Scots' Parliament . . .

Lou. Holds firm :
 We were about to read reports.

Pym. The King
 Has just dissolved your Parliament.

Lou. and other Scots. Great God !
 An oath-breaker ! Stand by us, England, then !

Pym. The King's too sanguine ; doubtless Went-
 worth's here ;

But still some little form might be kept up.

Hamp. Now speak, Vane ! Rudyard, you had much to say !

Hol. The rumour's false, then . . .

Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back : I know
'Tis the King calls him : Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played ; there's talk enough, by this,—
Merciful talk, the King thinks : time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
That, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry : the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, " Wentworth thrust it down
At the sword's point."

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym,
England's and God's—one blow !

Pym. A goodly thing—
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark above :
Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it ! All have done their best, indeed,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here : and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)
Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men ?
We would not—no, we would not give that up !

Hamp. And one name shall be dearer than all names.

'When children, yet unborn, are taught that name .
After their fathers',—taught what matchless man . . .

Pym. . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's
should be still

That name?

Rud. and others. We have just said it, Pym! His
death

Saves her! We said it—there's no way beside!
I'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
And purged the land.

Vane. No villainous striking-down!

Rud. No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
And shout for it. No Feltons!

Pym. Rudyard, no!

England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again
Of England in her servants—but I'll think
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!

Vane and others. Wentworth? Apostate! Judas!
Double-dyed

A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

Pym. . . . Who says

Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,
Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,
Along the streets to see the people pass
And read in every island-countenance
Fresh argument for God against the King,—
Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,
(You've joined us, Hampden—Hollis, you as well,)
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

Vane. To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause
In the Petition of Rights: he framed such clause
One month before he took at the King's hand
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
Denounced.

Pym. Too true! Never more, never more
Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—

But I shall never quite forget that friend.
 And yet it could not but be real in him !
 You, Vane,—you Rudyard, have no right to trust
 To Wentworth : but can no one hope with me ?
 Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood
 Like water ?

Hamp. Ireland is Aceldama.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
 To please the King, now that he knows the King ?
 The People or the King ? and that King, Charles !

Hamp. Pym, all here know you ; you'll not set your
 heart

On any baseless dream. But say one deed
 Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . . [*Shouting without.*

Vane. There ! he comes,

And they shout for him ! Wentworth's at Whitehall,
 The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
 And he, to be his match in courtesies,
 Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,
 Now, while you tell us here how changed he is !
 Hear you ?

Pym. And yet if 'tis a dream, no more,
 That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
 To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
 And the Queen after ;—that he led their cause
 Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
 So that our very eyes could look upon
 The travail of our souls and close content
 That violence, which something mars even rights
 Which sanction it, had taken off no grace
 From its serene regard. Only a dream !

Hamp. We meet here to accomplish certain good
 By obvious means, and keep tradition up
 Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
 In this poor chamber : nor without effect
 Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
 As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
 We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply

By these her delegates. Remains alone
That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall—
But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too ?
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use ?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here—
Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place ?
Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
And keep the old arms at their steady play ?
Proceed to England's work ! Fiennes, read the list !

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence . . . [*Shouting.*]

Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end ! Till now,
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
We English had free leave to think ; till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all's changed : they change the first,
They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .

Voices. Good ! Talk enough ! The old true hearts
with Vane !

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no
act
Serves England !

Voices. Vane for England !

Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall*

Lady CARLISLE and WENTWORTH

Went. And the King ?

Lady Car. Wentworth, lean on me ! Sit then !

I'll tell you all ; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.

Went. No ; or—Lucy, just your arm ;
I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him :
After that, rest. The King ?

Lady Car. Confides in you.

Went. Why ? or, why now ?—They have kind throats,
the knaves !

Shout for me—they !

Lady Car. You come so strangely soon :
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—
Did they shout for you ?

Went. Wherefore should they not ?
Does the King take such measures for himself ?
Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,
You say !

Lady Car. I said but few dared carp at you.

Went. At me ? at us, I hope ! The King and I !
He's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds
In Ireland ? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill ? He trusts me, too !

Lady Car. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I
said,

To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Went. All the Court ! Evermore the Court about us !
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us,—then the King will grant me—what ?
That he for once put these aside and say—
“ Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth ! ”

Lady Car. You professed
You would be calm.

Went. Lucy, and I am calm !
How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
How shall I serve the King ? Time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half. His footstep ! No.
Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—

Why does the King distrust me ?

Lady Car. He does not
Distrust you.

Went. Lucy, you can help me ; you
Have even seemed to care for me : one word !
Is it the Queen ?

Lady Car. No, not the Queen : the party
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.

Went. I know, I know : old Vane, too, he's one too ?
Go on—and he's made Secretary. Well ?
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge ;
The charge !

Lady Car. Oh, there's no charge, no precise charge ;
Only they sneer, make light of—one may say,
Nibble at what you do.

Went. I know ! but Lucy,
I reckoned on you from the first !—Go on !
—Was sure could I once see this gentle friend
When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
To help her . . . what am I ?

Lady Car. You thought of me,
Dear Wentworth ?

Went. But go on ! The party here !

Lady Car. They do not think your Irish Government
Of that surpassing value . . .

Went. The one thing
Of value ! The one service that the crown
May count on ! All that keeps these very Vanes
In power, to vex me—not that they do vex,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried, the sole support that's left the King !

Lady Car. So the Archbishop says.

Went. Ah ? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in my defence
May be old Laud's ! These Hollands then, these Saviles
Nibble ? They nibble ?—that's the very word !

Lady Car. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,
Exceeds the due proportion : while the tax . . .

Went. Enough ! 'tis too unworthy,—I am not
So patient as I thought ! What's Pym about ?

Lady Car. Pym ?

Went. Pym and the People.

Lady Car. Oh, the Faction !

Extinct—of no account : there 'll never be
Another Parliament.

Went. Tell Savile that !

You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here
Never forget !) that in my earliest life

I was not . . . much that I am now ! The King

May take my word on points concerning Pym

Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,

I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,

These Vanes and Hollands ! I'll not be their tool

Who might be Pym's friend yet.

But there's the King !

Where is he ?

Lady Car. Just apprised that you arrive.

Went. And why not here to meet me ? I was told
He sent for me, nay, longed for me.

Lady Car. Because,—

He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now
About this Scots affair.

Went. A Council sits ?

They have not taken a decided course

Without me in the matter ?

Lady Car. I should say . . .

Went. The war ? They cannot have agreed to that ?
Not the Scots war ?—without consulting me—

Me, that am here to show how rash it is,

How easy to dispense with ?—Ah, you too

Against me ! well,—the King may take his time.

—Forget it, Lucy ! Cares make peevish : mine

Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.

Lady Car. For life or death I am your own, dear
friend !

[Goes out.]

Went. Heartless ! but all are heartless here. Go now,

Forsake the People !—I did not forsake
 The People : they shall know it—when the King
 Will trust me !—who trusts all beside at once,
 While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
 And am not trusted : have but saved the throne :
 Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
 And am not trusted. But he'll see me now—
 Weston is dead : the Queen's half English now—
 More English : one decisive word will brush
 These insects from . . . the step I know so well !
 The King ! But now, to tell him . . . no—to ask
 What's in me he distrusts :—or, best begin
 By proving that this frightful Scots affair
 Is just what I foretold. So much to say,
 And the flesh fails, now, and the time is come,
 And one false step no way to be repaired !
 You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM enters

Went. I little thought of you just then.

Pym.

No ? I

Think always of you, Wentworth.

Went.

The old voice !

I wait the King, sir.

Pym.

True—you look so pale !

A Council sits within ; when that breaks up

He'll see you.

Went.

Sir, I thank you.

Pym.

Oh, thank Laud !

You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs

The case is desperate : he'll not be long

To-day : he only means to prove, to-day,

We English all are mad to have a hand

In butchering the Scots for serving God

After their fathers' fashion : only that !

Went. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish
 them !

(Does he enjoy their confidence ?) 'Tis kind
To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came ? no need : you shall have all
The credit, trust me !

Went. Have the Council dared—
They have not dared . . . that is—I know you not.
Farewell, sir : times are changed.

Pym. —Since we two met
At Greenwich ? Yes : poor patriots though we be,
You cut a figure makes some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland ! Changed indeed,
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave !
Ah Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,
Just to decide a question ; have you, now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us ?

Went. Sir !

Pym. Spare me the gesture ! you misapprehend !
Think not I mean the advantage is with me.
I was about to say that, for my part,
I never quite held up my head since then—
Was quite myself since then : for first, you see,
I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.
Forgive me : Savile, old Vane, Holland here,
Eschew plain-speaking : 'tis a trick I keep.

Went. How, when, where, Savile, Vane and Holland
speak,

Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,
All of my scorn, sir . . .

Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts
Claim somewhat ?

Went. Keep your thoughts ! believe the King
Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes
And Saviles ! make your mind up, o' God's love,
That I am discontented with the King !

Pym. Why, you may be : I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.

Went. Like me ?

Pym. I care not much
For titles : our friend Eliot died no lord,
Hampden's no lord, and Savile is a lord ;
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,
The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,
The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the movingest !
Console yourself : I've borne him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,
Words moving in their way : he'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.

Went. False, sir ! Who showed them you ? Suppose it so,
The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad
When it was shown me : I refused, the first !
John Pym, you were my friend—forbear me once !

Pym. Oh Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this !

Went. Leave me !

Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you ?

Went. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this !

Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,
Because I hope in you—yes, Wentworth, you
Who never mean to ruin England—you
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream
In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,
And Hampden's friend !

This is the proudest day !
 Come, Wentworth ! Do not even see the King !
 The rough old room will seem itself again !
 We'll both go in together : you've not seen
 Hampden so long : come : and there's Fiennes : you'll
 have

To know young Vane. This is the proudest day !
[The KING enters. WENTWORTH lets fall PYM's hand.
Cha. Arrived, my lord ?—This gentleman, we know,
 Was your old friend.

The Scots shall be informed
 What we determine for their happiness.
[PYM goes out.

You have made haste, my lord.

Went. Sir, I am come . . .

Cha. To see an old familiar—nay, 'tis well ;
 Aid us with his experience : this Scots League
 And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
 That they intrigue with France : the Faction too,
 Whereof your friend there is the head and front,
 Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.

Went. Sir, trust me ! but for this once, trust me, sir !

Cha. What can you mean ?

Went. That you should trust me, sir !
 Oh—not for my sake ! but 'tis sad, so sad
 That for distrusting me, you suffer—you
 Whom I would die to serve : sir, do you think
 That I would die to serve you ?

Cha. But rise, Wentworth !

Went. What shall convince you ? What does Savile
 do

To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart
 And show it, how sincere a thing it is !

Cha. Have I not trusted you ?

Went. Say aught but that !
 There is my comfort, mark you : all will be
 So different when you trust me—as you shall !
 It has not been your fault,—I was away,

Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know ?
I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—
All will go on so well !

Cha. Be sure I do—
I've heard that I should trust you : as you came,
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .
Went. No,—hear nothing—
Be told nothing about me !—you're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you !
Cha. You love me, Wentworth : rise !
Went. I can speak now.

I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I
Can save you : only I. Sir, what must be ?
Cha. Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)
—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .
Went. That is, he'll have a war : what's done is
done !

Cha. They have intrigued with France ; that's clear
to Laud.
Went. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
The war's expense ?

Cha. He'd not decide so far
Until you joined us.
Went. Most considerate !
He's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots ?
The People would be with us.

Cha. Pym should know.
Went. The People for us—were the People for us !
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust :
Summon a Parliament ! in Ireland first,
Then, here.

Cha. In truth ?
Went. That saves us ! that puts off
The war, gives time to right their grievances—
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, as
Laud styles it, tutors Scotland : all their plans
Suppose no Parliament : in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs

Of Scotland's treason ; then bid England help :
Even Pym will not refuse.

Cha. You would begin
With Ireland ?

Went. Take no care for that : that's sure
To prosper.

Cha. You shall rule me. You were best
Return at once : but take this ere you go !
Now, do I trust you ? You're an Earl : my Friend
Of Friends : yes, while . . . You hear me not !

Went. Say it all o'er again—but once again :
The first was for the music—once again !

Cha. Strafford, my friend, there may have been
reports,

Vain rumours. Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight : why gaze
So earnestly ?

Went. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of ?

Cha. Ireland,
The Parliament,—

Went. I may go when I will ?
—Now ?

Cha. Are you tired so soon of us ?
Went. My King ?

But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament ? I'd serve you any way.

Cha. You said just now this was the only way.
Went. Sir, I will serve you !

Cha. Strafford, spare yourself—
You are so sick, they tell me.

Went. 'Tis my soul
That's well and prospers now.

This Parliament—
We'll summon it, the English one—I'll care
For everything. You shall not need them much.

Cha. If they prove restive . . .
Went. I shall be with you.

Cha. Ere they assemble ?

Went.

I will come, or else

Deposit this infirm humanity

I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King !

[*As WENTWORTH goes out, the QUEEN enters.*]

Cha. That man must love me.

Queen.

Is it over then ?

Why, he looks yellower than ever ! Well,

At least we shall not hear eternally

Of service—services : he's paid at least.

Cha. Not done with : he engages to surpass

All yet performed in Ireland.

Queen.

I had thought

Nothing beyond was ever to be done.

The war, Charles—will he raise supplies enough ?

Cha. We've hit on an expedient ; he . . . that is,

I have advised . . . we have decided on

The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.

Queen. O truly ! You agree to that ? Is that

The first fruit of his counsel ? But I guessed

As much.

Cha. This is too idle, Henriette !

I should know best. He will strain every nerve,

And once a precedent established . . .

Queen.

Notice

How sure he is of a long term of favour !

He'll see the next, and the next after that ;

No end to Parliaments !

Cha.

Well, it is done.

He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,

The Commons here . . .

Queen.

Here ! you will summon them

Here ? Would I were in France again to see

A King !

Cha.

But, Henriette . . .

Queen.

Oh, the Scots see clear !

Why should they bear your rule ?

Cha.

But listen, sweet !

Queen. Let Wentworth listen—you confide in him !

Cha. I do not, love,—I do not so confide !

The Parliament shall never trouble us

. . . Nay, hear me ! I have schemes, such schemes :
we'll buy

The leaders off : without that, Wentworth's counsel

Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it

To have excuse for breaking it for ever,

And whose will then the blame be ? See you not ?

Come, dearest !—look, the little fairy, now,

That cannot reach my shoulder ! Dearest, come !

ACT II

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

The same Party enters

Rud. Twelve subsidies !

Vane. O Rudyard, do not laugh
At least !

Rud. True : Strafford called the Parliament—
'Tis he should laugh !

A Puritan. Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.

Fien. —A stinging one,
If that's the Parliament : twelve subsidies !
A stinging one ! but, brother, where's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots war ?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

Fien. Shall be ? It chips the shell, man ; peeps
abroad.

Twelve subsidies !—Why, how now, Vane ?

Rud. Peace, Fiennes !

Fien. Ah ?—But he was not more a dupe than I,
Or you, or any here, the day that Pym

Returned with the good news. Look up, friend
 Vane !
 We all believed that Strafford meant us well
 In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN enters

Vane. Now, Hampden,
 Clear me ! I would have leave to sleep again :
 I'd look the People in the face again :
 Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
 Better of Strafford !

Hamp. You may grow one day
 A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane !

Rud. Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see
 Strafford revived our Parliaments ; before,
 War was but talked of ; there's an army, now :
 Still, we've a Parliament ! Poor Ireland bears
 Another wrench (she dies the hardest death !) —
 Why, speak of it in Parliament ! and lo,
 'Tis spoken, so console yourselves !

Fien. The jest !
 We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
 The privilege of laying on our backs
 A sorer burden than the King dares lay ! •

Rud. Mark now : we meet at length, complaints pour
 in
 From every county, all the land cries out
 On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
 Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber ; we lend
 An ear. “ Ay, lend them all the ears you have ! ”
 Puts in the King ; “ my subjects, as you find,
 Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.
 Just listen to them, friends ; you'll sanction me
 The measures they most wince at, make them yours,
 Instead of mine, I know : and, to begin,
 They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight
 Twelve subsidies ! ”

Fien. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies !

Hol. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland—what has he to do with that ?
How could he speak his mind ? He left before
The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .

Rud. Would I were sure we know ourselves !
What is for good, what, bad—who friend, who foe !

Hol. Do you count Parliaments no gain ?

Rud. A gain ?
While the King's creatures overbalance us ?
—There's going on, beside, among ourselves
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville's gone.
I'll put a case ; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money !

Hol. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .

Rud. Will grant them ! Hampden, do you hear ?
Congratulate with me ! the King's the king,
And gains his point at last—our own assent
To that detested tax ! All's over, then !
There's no more taking refuge in this room,
Protesting, " Let the King do what he will,
We, England, are no party to our shame :
Our day will come ! " Congratulate with me !

PYM enters

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,
But we'll not have our Parliaments like those
In Ireland, Pym !

Rud. Let him stand forth, your friend !
One doubtful act hides far too many sins ;
It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,
Begins to drop from those it covered.

Other Voices. Good !
Let him avow himself ! No fitter time !
We wait thus long for you.

Rud. Perhaps, too long !
Since nothing but the madness of the Court,
In thus unmasking its designs at once,
Has saved us from betraying England. Stay—
This Parliament is Strafford's : let us vote
Our list of grievances too black by far
To suffer talk of subsidies : or best,
That ship-money's disposed of long ago
By England : any vote that's broad enough :
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
Support his Parliament !

Vane. And vote as well
No war to be with Scotland ! Hear you, Pym ?
We'll vote, no war ! No part nor lot in it
For England !

Many Voices. Vote, no war ! Stop the new levies !
No Bishops' war ! At once ! When next we meet !

Pym. Much more when next we meet ! Friends,
which of you
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,
Has fallen the most away in soul from me ?

Vane. I sat apart, even now, under God's eye,
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy.

Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand
And say you pardon me for all the pain
Till now ! Strafford is wholly ours.

Many Voices. Sure ? sure ?

Pym. Most sure : for Charles dissolves the Parliament

While I speak here.

—And I must speak, friends, now !
 Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,
 Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
 His ancient path : no Parliament for us,
 No Strafford for the King !

Come, all of you,
 To bid the King farewell, predict success
 To his Scots expedition, and receive
 Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be
 Indeed a Parliament !

Vane.

Forgive me, Pym !

Voices. This looks like truth : Strafford can have,
 indeed,

No choice.

Pym. Friends, follow me ! He's with the King.
 Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane !
 This is no sullen day for England, sirs !
 Strafford shall tell you !

Voices.

To Whitehall then ! Come !

SCENE II.—*Whitehall*

CHARLES *and* STRAFFORD

Cha. Strafford !

Straf.

Is it a dream ? my papers, here—
 Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found
 So happy—(look ! the track you pressed my hand
 For pointing out)—and in this very room,
 Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
 With the same face, too—tell me just one thing
 That ruins them ! How's this ? What may this mean ?
 Sir, who has done this ?

Cha.

Strafford, who but I ?

You bade me put the rest away : indeed
 You are alone.

Straf. Alone, and like to be !
No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world ! Laud hatches war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
And I'm alone.

Cha. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.

Straf. My liege,
Was this the way ? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 'twere best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole months
At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
I'd lead an Irish army to the West,
While in the South an English . . . but you look
As though you had not told me fifty times
'Twas a brave plan ! My army is all raised,
I am prepared to join it . . .

Cha. Hear me, *Strafford* !

Straf. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole
design
Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper ?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
The English army : why ? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened : and, meanwhile, who answers for
The Irish Parliament ? or army, either ?
Is this my plan ?

Cha. So disrespectful, sir ?

Straf. My liege, do not believe it ! I am yours,
Yours ever : 'tis too late to think about :
To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step
Shall pass for mine ; the world shall think it mine.
But, here ! But, here ! I am so seldom here,
Seldom with you, my King ! I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark !

Cha. My *Strafford* !

Straf. [*examines papers awhile.*] "Seize the passes of the Tyne" !

But, sir, you see—see all I say is true ?
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
To ask the Parliament for help ; whereas
We need them frightfully.

Cha. Need the Parliament ?

Straf. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more !
We can afford no error ; we draw, now,
Upon our last resource : the Parliament
Must help us !

Cha. I've undone you, Strafford !

Straf. Nay—
Nay—why despond, sir, 'tis not come to that !
I have not hurt you ? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you ? I unsay it ! Don't despond !
Sir, do you turn from me ?

Cha. My friend of friends !

Straf. We'll make a shift. Leave me the Parliament !
Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make
Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.
They're sitting, that's one great thing ; that half gives
Their sanction to us ; that's much : don't despond !
Why, let them keep their money, at the worst !
The reputation of the People's help
Is all we want : we'll make shift yet !

Cha. Good Strafford !

Straf. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small
They offer, we'll accept it : any sum—
For the look of it : the least grant tells the Scots
The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally
Turned ours : that told, there's half the blow to strike !
What will the grant be ? What does Glanville think ?

Cha. Alas !

Straf. My liege ?

Cha. Strafford !

Straf. But answer me !
Have they . . . O surely not refused us half ?

Half the twelve subsidies ? We never looked
For all of them. How many do they give ?

Cha. You have not heard . . .

Straf. (What has he done ?)—Heard what ?
But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible !

[The King continuing silent.]

You have dissolved them !—I'll not leave this man.

Cha. 'Twas old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.

Straf. Old Vane ?

Cha. He told them, just about to vote the half,
That nothing short of all twelve subsidies
Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Straf. Vane !

Vane ! Who, sir, promised me that very Vane . . .
O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,
The one last hope—I that despair, my hope—
That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
All bitterness one day, be proud again
And young again, care for the sunshine too,
And never think of Eliot any more,—
God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart
And find Vane there !

[Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness.]

Northumberland is sick :

Well, then, I take the army : Wilmot leads
The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure
The passes of the Tyne : Ormond supplies
My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City :
If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
And seize the bullion ! we've no other choice.
Herbert . . .

And this while I am here ! with you !
And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane ! I go,
And, I once gone, they'll close around you, sir,
When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
To ruin me—and you along with me !

Do you see that ? And you along with me !

—Sir, you'll not ever listen to these men,

And I away, fighting your battle ? Sir,

If they—if She—charge me, no matter how—

Say you, " At any time when he returns

His head is mine ! " Don't stop me there ! You know

My head is yours, but never stop me there !

Cha. Too shameful, Strafford ! You advised the war,
And . . .

Straf. I ! I ! that was never spoken with

Till it was entered on ! That loathe the war !

That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .

Do you know, sir, I think, within my heart,

That you would say I did advise the war ;

And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,

These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,

You will not step between the raging People

And me, to say . . .

I knew it ! from the first

I knew it ! Never was so cold a heart !

Remember that I said it—that I never

Believed you for a moment !

—And, you loved me ?

You thought your perfidy profoundly hid

Because I could not share the whisperings

With Vane, with Savile ? What, the face was masked ?

I had the heart to see, sir ! Face of flesh,

But heart of stone—of smooth cold frightful stone !

Ay, call them ! Shall I call for you ? The Scots

Goaded to madness ? Or the English—Pym—

Shall I call Pym, your subject ? Oh, you think

I'll leave them in the dark about it all ?

They shall not know you ? Hampden, Pym shall not ?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, enter

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favoured with your
gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against
Your servant, utterly and ever yours ?
So, gentlemen, the King's not even left
The privilege of bidding me farewell
Who haste to save the People—that you style
Your People—from the mercies of the Scots
And France their friend ?

[*To CHARLES.*] Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed
Upon you, sir !

Your pleasure, gentlemen ?

Hamp. The King dissolved us—'tis the King we
seek
And not Lord Strafford.

Straf. —Strafford, guilty too
Of counselling the measure. [*To CHARLES.*] (Hush . . .
you know—

You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)
A heinous matter, truly ! But the King
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so !)—he
blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge :
I shall be with the Scots, you understand ?
Then yelp at me !

Meanwhile, your Majesty
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .

[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest : as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.*

Hamp. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man !
Vane and others. Hence, Pym ! Come out of this
unworthy place
To our old room again ! He's gone.

[*STRAFFORD, just about to follow the King, looks back.*

Pym. Not gone !

[To STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst ! the old appointment's
made anew :

Forget not we shall meet again !

Straf.

So be it !

And if an army follows me ?

Vane.

His friends

Will entertain your army !

Pym.

I'll not say

You have misreckoned, Strafford : time shows.

Perish

Body and spirit ! Fool to feign a doubt,

Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve

Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat !

What share have I in it ? Do I affect

To see no dismal sign above your head

When God suspends his ruinous thunder there ?

Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you !

[PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc.*, go out.]

Straf. Pym, we shall meet again !

Lady CARLISLE *enters*

You here, child ?

Lady Car.

Hush—

I know it all : hush, Strafford !

Straf.

Ah ? you know ?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy !

All knights begin their enterprise, we read,

Under the best of auspices ; 'tis morn,

The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth

(He's always very young)—the trumpets sound,

Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him—

You need not turn a page of the romance

To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed,

We've the fair Lady here ; but she apart,—

A poor man, rarely having handled lance,

And rather old, weary, and far from sure

His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All's one :

Let us go forth !

Lady Car. Go forth ?

Straf. What matters it ?

We shall die gloriously—as the book says.

Lady Car. To Scotland ? not to Scotland ?

Straf. Am I sick

Like your good brother, brave Northumberland ?

Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

Lady Car. *Strafford,*

The wind that saps these walls can undermine

Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind ?

Have you no eyes except for Pym ? Look here !

A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive

In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym ? Old Vane

Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly ?

Rush on the Scots ! Do nobly ! Vane's slight sneer

Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest

The faint result : Vane's sneer shall reach you there.

—You do not listen !

Straf. Oh,—I give that up !

There's fate in it : I give all here quite up.

Care not what old Vane does or Holland does

Against me ! 'Tis so idle to withstand !

In no case tell me what they do !

Lady Car. But, *Strafford* . . .

Straf. I want a little strife, beside ; real strife ;

This petty, palace-warfare does me harm :

I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

Lady Car. Why do you smile ?

Straf. I got to fear them, child !

I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,

As he leered at me on his stealthy way

To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart !

I often found it in my heart to say

" Do not traduce me to her ! "

Lady Car. But the King . . .

Straf. The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,

—There ; and the whisper, Lucy, " Be my friend

Of friends ! "—My King ! I would have . . .

Lady Car.

. . . Died for him ?

Straf. Sworn him true, Lucy : I can die for him.*Lady Car.* But go not, Strafford ! But you must
renounceThis project on the Scots ! Die, wherefore die ?
Charles never loved you.*Straf.*

And he never will.

He's not of those who care the more for men

That they're unfortunate.

Lady Car.

Then wherefore die

For such a master ?

Straf.

You that told me first

How good he was—when I must leave true friends

To find a truer friend !—that drew me here

From Ireland,—“ I had but to show myself

And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile and the rest ”—

You, child, to ask me this ?

Lady Car.

(If he have set

His heart abidingly on Charles !)

Then, friend,

I shall not see you any more.

Straf.

Yes, Lucy.

There's one man here I have to meet.

Lady Car.

(The King !

What way to save him from the King ?

My soul—

That lent from its own store the charmed disguise

That clothes the King—he shall behold my soul !)

Strafford,—I shall speak best if you'll not gaze

Upon me : I had never thought, indeed,

To speak, but you would perish too, so sure !

Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my friend,

One image stamped within you, turning blank

The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—

A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw

I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face

Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there

Lest nature lose her gracious thought for ever !

Straf. When could it be? no! Yet . . . was it the day
We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber?

Lady Car.

What?

Straf.

—That I

Described to you my love for Charles?

Lady Car.

(Ah, no—

One must not lure him from a love like that!

Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past.

I shall not serve him worse for that one brief

And passionate hope, silent for ever now!

And you are really bound for Scotland then?

I wish you well: you must be very sure

Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew

Will not be idle—setting Vane aside!

Straf. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym.

Lady Car. What need, since there's your King to
take your part?

He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym—

Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

Straf.

Child, your hair

Is glossier than the Queen's!

Lady Car.

Is that to ask

A curl of me?

Straf.

Scotland—the weary way!

Lady Car. Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford?

Straf. [*showing the George.*] He hung it there: twine
yours around it, child!

Lady Car. No—no—another time—I trifle so!

And there's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court

Is dull; do something to enliven us

In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.

Straf. I shall not fail in Scotland.

Lady Car.

Prosper—if

You'll think of me sometimes!

Straf.

How think of him

And not of you? of you, the lingering streak

(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

Lady Car. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its last streak

The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*]

Straf. That voice of hers—

You'd think she had a heart sometimes ! His voice
Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.

Be Thou about his bed, about his path !

His path ! Where's England's path ? Diverging wide

And not to join again the track my foot

Must follow—whither ? All that forlorn way

Among the tombs ! Far—far—till . . . What, they do

Then join again, these paths ? For, huge in the dusk,

There's—Pym to face !

Why then, I have a foe

To close with, and a fight to fight at last

Worthy my soul ! What, do they beard the King,

And shall the King want Strafford at his need ?

Am I not here ?

Not in the market-place,

Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud

To catch a glance from Wentworth ! They lie down

Hungry yet smile " Why, it must end some day :

Is he not watching for our sake ? " Not there !

But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,

The . . .

Curse nothing to-night ! Only one name

They'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose fault ?

Did I make kings ? set up, the first, a man

To represent the multitude, receive

All love in right of them—supplant them so,

Until you love the man and not the king—

The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes

Which send me forth.

—To breast the bloody sea

That sweeps before me : with one star for guide.

Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND *and others of the Court*

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out ?

Savile. And what kept you

From sharing their civility ?

Sir H. Vane. Kept me ?

Fresh news from Scotland, sir ! worse than the last,

If that may be. All's up with Strafford there :

Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither

Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir !

Well now, before they thrust you out,—go on,—

Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthal say

All we set down for him ?

Hol. Not a word missed.

Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I

And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed

A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.

But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,

As glared at us !

Vane. So many ?

Savile. Not a bench

Without its complement of burly knaves ;

Your hopeful son among them : Hampden leant

Upon his shoulder—think of that !

Vane. I'd think

On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.

Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove

For this unlooked-for summons from the King ?

Hol. Just as we drilled him.

Vane. That the Scots will march
On London ?

Hol. All, and made so much of it,

A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well ?

Hol. 'Tis a strange thing now !
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking ! Savile, help me out :
What was it all ?

Sav. Something about " a matter "—
No,—“ work for England.”

Hol. “ England's great revenge ”
He talked of.

Sav. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves ?

Hol. However that be,
'Twas something with which we had nought to do,
For we were “ strangers ” and 'twas “ England's
work ”—

(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared.
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we.

Vane. Eliot's old method . . .

Sav. Prithee, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments ! 'Twas you
Advised the Queen to summon this : why, Strafford
(To do him justice) would not hear of it.

Vane. Say rather, you have done the best of
turns

To Strafford : he's at York, we all know why.
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford
Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord !

Sav. Was it I altered Strafford's plans ? did I . . .

A Messenger enters

Mes. The Queen, my lords—she sends me : follow me
At once ; 'tis very urgent ! she requires
Your counsel : something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.

Sav. We follow, friend !
Now, Vane ;—your Parliament will plague us all !
Vane. No Strafford here beside !

Sav. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .

Hol. Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym
Will overmatch the best of you ; and, think,
The Queen !

Vane. Come on, then : understand, I loathe
Strafford as much as any—but his use !
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall*

The QUEEN and Lady CARLISLE

Queen. It cannot be.

Lady Car. It is so.

Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.

Lady Car. They met for that.

Queen. No, no !
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford ? 'Tis a jest.

Lady Car. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider ! 'Tis the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt ; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances :
They have their grievances to busy them.

Lady Car. Pym has begun his speech.

And bring destruction with him ; that's his way.
 What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan ?
 The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
 Be wholly ruled by him ! What's the result ?
 The North that was to rise, Ireland to help,—
 What came of it ? In my poor mind, a fright
 Is no prodigious punishment.

Lady Car.

A fright ?

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
 To frighten him. [*To the QUEEN.*] You will not save
 him then ?

Sav. When something like a charge is made, the King
 Will best know how to save him : and 'tis clear,
 While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
 The King may reap advantage : this in question,
 No dinning you with ship-money complaints !

Queen. [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] If we dissolve them, who
 will pay the army ?

Protect us from the insolent Scots ?

Lady Car.

In truth,

I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
 Me little : you desired to learn what course
 Would save him : I obey you.

Vane.

Notice, too,

There can't be fairer ground for taking full
 Revenge—(Strafford's revengeful)—than he'll have
 Against his old friend Pym.

Queen.

Why, he shall claim

Vengeance on Pym !

Vane.

And Strafford, who is he

To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
 That harass all beside ? I, for my part,
 Should look for something of discomfiture
 Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
 And been so paid for it.

Hol.

He'll keep at York :

All will blow over : he'll return no worse,
 Humbled a little, thankful for a place

Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two !

STRAFFORD *enters*

Queen. You here !

Straf. The King sends for me, madam.

Queen. Sir,

The King . . .

Straf. An urgent matter that imports the King.
[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now,
That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me ? They do not speak !

Lady Car. 'Tis welcome !

For we are proud of you—happy and proud
To have you with us, Strafford ! You were staunch
At Durham : you did well there ! Had you not
Been stayed, you might have . . . we said, even now,
Our hope's in you !

Sir H. Vane. [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] The Queen would
speak with you.

Straf. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King ?

Sav. An urgent matter ?

Straf. None that touches you,
Lord Savile ! Say, it were some treacherous
Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
You would go free, at least ! (They half divine
My purpose !) Madam, shall I see the King ?
The service I would render, much concerns
His welfare.

Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may . . .

Straf. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

Queen. [*Who has been conversing with VANE and
HOLLAND.*] The King will see you, sir !

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Mark me : Pym's worst
 Is done by now : he has impeached the Earl,
 Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
 Let us not seem instructed ! We should work
 No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
 With shame in the world's eye. [*To STRAFFORD.*] His
 Majesty

Has much to say with you.

Straf. Time fleeting, too !
 [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] No means of getting them away ?
 And She—

What does she whisper ? Does she know my purpose ?
 What does she think of it ? Get them away !

Queen. [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] He comes to baffle Pym
 —he thinks the danger

Far off : tell him no word of it ! a time
 For help will come ; we'll not be wanting then.
 Keep him in play, Lucy—you, self-possessed
 And calm ! [*To STRAFFORD.*] To spare your lordship
 some delay

I will myself acquaint the King. [*To Lady CARLISLE.*]
 Beware !

[*The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, and SAVILE go out.*]

Straf. She knows it ?

Lady Car. Tell me, Strafford !

Straf. Afterward !

This moment's the great moment of all time.

She knows my purpose ?

Lady Car. Thoroughly : just now

She bade me hide it from you.

Straf. Quick, dear child,

The whole o' the scheme ?

Lady Car. (Ah, he would learn if they
 Connive at Pym's procedure ! Could they but
 Have once apprised the King ! But there's no time
 For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.

Straf. Known and approved ?

Lady Car. Hardly discountenanced.

Straf. And the King—say, the King consents as well ?

Lady Car. The King's not yet informed, but will not dare

To interpose.

Straf. What need to wait him, then ?
He'll sanction it ! I stayed, child, tell him, long !
It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here.
You know him, there's no counting on the King.
Tell him I waited long !

Lady Car. (What can he mean ?
Rejoice at the King's hollowness ?)

Straf. I knew
They would be glad of it,—all over once,
I knew they would be glad : but he'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making.

Lady Car. (Is he mad ?) Dear *Strafford*,
You were not wont to look so happy.

Straf. Sweet,
I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
The King's wild plan : of course, ere I could reach
My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
And would have fought the Scots : the King at once
Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
For Charles, but never to obey him more !
While he endured their insolence at Ripon
I fell on them at Durham. But you'll tell
The King I waited ? All the anteroom
Is filled with my adherents.

Lady Car. *Strafford*—*Strafford*,
What daring act is this you hint ?

Straf. No, no !
'Tis here, not daring if you knew ! all here !

[*Drawing papers from his breast.*
Full proof, see, ample proof—does the Queen know
I have such damning proof ? *Bedford* and *Essex*,

Broke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile ?
The simpler that I spoilt ?) Saye, Mandeville—
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym !

Lady Car. Great heaven !

Straf. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
And his losels, crushed !—Pym shall not ward the blow
Nor Savile creep aside from it ! The Crew
And the Cabal—I crush them !

Lady Car. And you go—
Strafford,—and now you go ?—

Straf. —About no work
In the background, I promise you ! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
Mainwaring !

Lady Car. Stay—stay, Strafford !

Straf. She'll return,
The Queen—some little project of her own !
No time to lose : the King takes fright perhaps.

Lady Car. Pym's strong, remember !

Straf. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head—with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis : one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan ! Mainwaring !

[*Many of his Adherents enter.*]

The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots war ; my visit's opportune.
When all is over, Bryan, you proceed
To Ireland : these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond :
We want the army here—my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time ! no matter,
We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no—you !
You, friend, make haste to York : bear this, at once . . .
Or,—better stay for form's sake, see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,

Mainwaring ! Help to seize the lesser knaves,
Take care there's no escaping at backdoors :
I'll not have one escape, mind me—not one !
I seem revengeful, Lucy ? Did you know
What these men dare !

Lady Car. It is so much they dare !

Straf. I proved that long ago ; my turn is now.
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens !
Observe who harbours any of the brood
That scramble off : be sure they smart for it !
Our coffers are but lean.

And you, child, too,
Shall have your task ; deliver this to Laud.
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise :
“ Thorough ” he'll cry !—Foolish, to be so glad !
This life is gay and glowing, after all :
'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
Is worth the living for.

Lady Car. That reddening brow !
You seem . . .

Straf. Well—do I not ? I would be well—
I could not but be well on such a day !
And, this day ended, 'tis of slight import
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
In *Strafford*.

Lady Car. Noble *Strafford* !

Straf. No farewell !
I'll see you anon, to-morrow—the first thing.
—If She should come to stay me !

Lady Car. Go—'tis nothing—
Only my heart that swells : it has been thus
Ere now : go, *Strafford* !

Straf. To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him : you, the next after Him.
I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends !
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me !

" My friend of friends ! "

[STRAFFORD *and the rest go out.*

Lady Car.

The King—ever the King !

No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him—one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe !

Ah, have I spared

Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory ? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no—
He would not look so joyous—I'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III.—*The Antechamber of the House of Lords*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents
of STRAFFORD, etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians.—1. I tell you he struck
Maxwell : Maxwell sought

To stay the Earl : he struck him and passed on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance
Before these rufflers.

3. Strafford here the first,
With the great army at his back !

4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste : that's Bryan, hush—
The gallant pointing.

Strafford's Followers.—1. Mark these worthies, now !

2. A goodly gathering ! " Where the carcass is
There shall the eagles "—what's the rest ?

3. For eagles
Say crows.

A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs !

One of Strafford's Followers. Are we in Geneva ?

A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland ; we have leave to breathe.

One of Strafford's Followers. Truly ? Behold how privileged we be

That serve " King Pym " ! There's Some-one at White-hall

Who skulks obscure ; but Pym struts . . .

The Presbyterian. Nearer.

A Follower of Strafford. Higher,

We look to see him. [*To his Companions.*] I'm to have St. John

In charge ; was he among the knaves just now

That followed Pym within there ?

Another. The gaunt man

Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect

Pym at his heels so fast ? I like it not.

MAXWELL enters

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net ! Here's Maxwell—

Ha, Maxwell ? How the brethren flock around

The fellow ! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet

Upon your shoulder, Maxwell ?

Max. Gentlemen,

Stand back ! a great thing passes here.

A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*] The Earl

Is at his work ! [*To M.*] Say, Maxwell, what great thing !

Speak out ! [*To a Presbyterian.*] Friend, I've a kindness for you ! Friend,

I've seen you with St. John : O stockishness !

Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind

St. John's head in a charger ? How, the plague,

Not laugh ?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing !

Another. Nay, wait

The jest will be to wait.

First. And who's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they came . . .
Came . . . just as we come !

[*A Puritan enters hastily and without observing STRAFFORD'S Followers.*

The Puritan. How goes on the work ?
Has Pym . . .

A Follower of Strafford. The secret's out at last. Aha,
The carrion's scented ! Welcome, crow the first !
Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye !
" King Pym has fallen ! "

The Puritan. Pym ?

A Strafford. Pym !

A Presbyterian. Only Pym ?

Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother, not Pym
only ; Vane as well,

Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well !

A Presbyterian. My mind misgives : can it be true ?

Another. Lost ! Lost !

A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell ?

The Puritan. Pride before destruction,
A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now ! The very
thing ! A word in season !

A golden apple in a silver picture,

To greet Pym as he passes !

[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*

Max. Stand back, all !

Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym ! And I !

Strafford's Followers. Now for the text !

He comes ! Quick !

The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased !
The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked !

The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote

The people in wrath with a continual stroke,

That ruled the nations in his anger—he

Is persecuted and none hindereth !

[*The doors open, and STRAFFORD issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of "Void the House."*]

Straf. Impeach me ! Pym ! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . .
God !

Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart—which beats !
Which beats ! Some one word—"Traitor," did he say,
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me ?

Max. In the Commons' name, their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Straf. What did you say ?

Max. The Commons bid me ask your lordship's sword.

Straf. Let us go forth : follow me, gentlemen !
Draw your swords too : cut any down that bar us.
On the King's service ! Maxwell, clear the way !

[*The Presbyterians prepare to dispute his passage.*]

Straf. I say : the King himself shall see me here.
Your tablets, fellow !

[*To MAINWARING.*] Give that to the King !
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be !
Nay, you shall take my sword !

[*MAXWELL advances to take it.*]

Or, no—not that !

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
All up to that—not that ! Why, friend, you see,
When the King lays your head beneath my foot
It will not pay for that. Go, all of you !

Max. I dare, my lord, to disobey : none stir !

Straf. This gentle Maxwell !—Do not touch him,
Bryan !

[*To the Presbyterians.*] Whichever cur of you will carry
this

Escapes his fellows' fate. None saves his life ?
None ?

[*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD."*]

Slingsby, I've loved you at least : make haste !
 Stab me ! I have not time to tell you why.
 You then, my Bryan ! Mainwaring, you then !
 Is it because I spoke so hastily
 At Allerton ? The King had vexed me.
 [*To the Presbyterians.*] You !

—Not even you ? If I live over this,
 The King is sure to have your heads, you know !
 But what if I can't live this minute through ?
 Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile !
 [*Louder cries of "STRAFFORD."*]

The King ! I troubled him, stood in the way
 Of his negotiations, was the one
 Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
 Of Scotland : and he sent for me, from York,
 My safety guaranteed—having prepared
 A Parliament—I see ! And at Whitehall
 The Queen was whispering with Vane—I see
 The trap ! [*Tearing off the George.*]

I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
 And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now !
 [*His own Adherents disarm him. Renewed
 cries of "STRAFFORD."*]

England ! I see thy arm in this and yield.
 Pray you now—Pym awaits me—pray you now !

[*STRAFFORD reaches the doors : they open wide.
 HAMPDEN and a crowd discovered, and, at
 the bar, PYM standing apart. As STRAF-
 FORD kneels, the scene shuts.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*Whitehall*

The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, in the background)

Lady Car. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake ! One word !

Cha. [*To HOLLIS.*] You stand, silent and cold, as though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times. What wonder after all ?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hol. Sir,

It is yourself that you deceive, not me.
You'll quit me comforted, your mind made up
That, since you've talked thus much and grieved thus
much,

All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford—(come, we grant you
leave,

Suppose)—

Hol. I may withdraw, sir ?

Lady Car. Hear them out !

'Tis the last chance for Strafford ! Hear them out !

Hol. " If we kill Strafford "—on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—" We ! "

Cha. Pym, my good Hollis—

Pym, I should say !

Hol. Ah, true—sir, pardon me !

You witness our proceedings every day ;
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.
Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the place

Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
 —That's England ; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,
 Their representatives ; the Peers that judge
 Are easily distinguished ; one remarks
 The People here and there : but the close curtain
 Must hide so much !

Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
 This day the curtain shall be dashed aside !
 It served a purpose.

Hol. Think ! This very day ?
 Ere Strafford rises to defend himself ?

Cha. I will defend him, sir !—sanction the past
 This day : it ever was my purpose. Rage
 At me, not Strafford !

Lady Car. Nobly !—will he not
 Do nobly ?

Hol. Sir, you will do honestly ;
 And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

Cha. Only, to do this now !—" deaf " (in your style)
 " To subjects' prayers,"—I must oppose them now.
 It seems their will the trial should proceed,—
 So palpably their will !

Hol. You peril much,
 But it were no bright moment save for that.
 Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree
 That props this quaking House of Privilege,
 (Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous
 sand !)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm
 Could save him, you'd save Strafford.

Cha. And they mean
 Consume calmly this great wrong ! No hope ?
 This ineffaceable wrong ! No pity then ?

Hol. No plague in store for perfidy ?—Farewell !
 You called me, sir—[*To Lady CARLISLE,*] you, lady,
 bade me come

To save the Earl : I came, thank God for it,
 To learn how far such perfidy can go !

You, sir, concert with me on saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford !

Cha. I ?—and how ?

Hol. Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Pym's charges back : a blind moth-eaten law !
—He'll break from it at last : and whom to thank ?
The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other mouse,
That looked on while the lion freed himself—
Fared he so well, does any fable say ?

Cha. What can you mean ?

Hol. Pym never could have proved
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience : Vane—
Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.

Cha. Vane ?

Hol. This day. Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Seal Strafford's fate ?

Cha. Sir, as I live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done ! What treason next ?
I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth !
Ask Vane himself !

Hol. I will not speak to Vane,
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.

Queen. Speak to Vane's master then ! What gain to
him
Were Strafford's death ?

Hol. Ha ? Strafford cannot turn
As you, sir, sit there—bid you forth, demand
If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission ?—whether you contrived
Or no, that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways—your own,—his part,
To counteract the King's kind impulses—
While . . . but you know what he could say ! And then
He might produce,—mark, sir !—a certain charge
To set the King's express command aside,

If need were, and be blameless. He might add . . .

Cha. Enough !

Hol. —Who bade him break the Parliament,
Find some pretext for setting up sword-law !

Queen. Retire !

Cha. Once more, whatever Vane dared do,
I know not : he is rash, a fool—I know
Nothing of Vane !

Hol. Well—I believe you. Sir,
Believe me, in return, that . . .
[Turning to Lady CARLISLE.] Gentle lady,
The few words I would say, the stones might hear
Sooner than these,—I rather speak to you,
You, with the heart ! The question, trust me, takes
Another shape, to-day : not, if the King
Or England shall succumb,—but, who shall pay
The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,
You loved me once : think on my warning now !

Cha. On you and on your warning both !—Carlisle !
That paper !

Queen. But consider !

Cha. Give it me !
There, signed—will that content you ? Do not speak !
You have betrayed me, Vane ! See ! any day,
According to the tenor of that paper,
He bids your brother bring the army up,
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
Seek Strafford ! Let him have the same, before
He rises to defend himself !

Queen. In truth ?
That your shrewd Hollis should have worked a change
Like this ! You, late reluctant . . .

Cha. Say, Carlisle,
Your brother Percy brings the army up,
Falls on the Parliament—(I'll think of you,
My Hollis !) say, we plotted long—'tis mine,
The scheme is mine, remember ! Say, I cursed

Vane's folly in your hearing ! If the Earl
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
With you, Carlisle !

Lady Car. Nay, fear not me ! but still
That's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.
Tear down the veil and save him !

Queen. Go, Carlisle !

Lady Car. (I shall see Strafford—speak to him : my
heart
Must never beat so, then ! And if I tell
The truth ? What's gained by falsehood ? There they
stand

Whose trade it is, whose life it is ! How vain
To gild such rottenness ! Strafford shall know,
Thoroughly know them !)

Queen. Trust to me ! [*To CARLISLE.*] Carlisle,
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford : this bold plan of yours
Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Lady Car. Time presses, madam.

Queen. Yet—may it not be something premature ?
Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves
Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose !

Lady Car. Ay, Hollis hints as much.

Cha. Why linger then ?
Haste with the scheme—my scheme : I shall be there
To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look !

Queen. Stay, we'll precede you !

Lady Car. At your pleasure.

Cha. Say—
Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall !
I shall be there, remember !

Lady Car. Doubt me not.

Cha. On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here !

Lady Car. I'll bring his answer. Sir, I follow you.
(Prove the King faithless, and I take away
All Strafford cares to live for : let it be—
'Tis the King's scheme !

My Strafford, I can save,
 Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce content,
 Because my poor name will not cross your mind.
 Strafford, how much I am unworthy you !)

SCENE II.—*A passage adjoining Westminster Hall*

Many groups of Spectators of the Trial. Officers of the Court, etc.

1st *Spec.* More crowd than ever ! Not know Hampden, man ?
 That's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.
 No, truly, if you look so high you'll see
 Little enough of either !

2nd *Spec.* Stay : Pym's arm
 Points like a prophet's rod.
 3rd *Spec.* Ay, ay, we've heard
 Some pretty speaking : yet the Earl escapes.

4th *Spec.* I fear it : just a foolish word or two
 About his children—and we see, forsooth,
 Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man
 Who, sick, half-blind . . .

2nd *Spec.* What's that Pym's saying now
 Which makes the curtains flutter ? look ! A hand
 Clutches them. Ah ! The King's hand !

5th *Spec.* I had thought
 Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend ?

2nd *Spec.* "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"
 And the Earl turns as if to . . . look ! look !

Many Spectators. There !
 What ails him ? no—he rallies, see—goes on
 And Strafford smiles. Strange !

An Officer. Haselrig !

Many Spectators. Friend ? Friend ?

The Officer. Lost, utterly lost : just when we looked
 for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech ! Is Haselrig without ?
Pym's message is to him.

3rd Spec. Now, said I true ?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no ?

1st Spec. Never believe it, man ! These notes of
Vane's
Ruin the Earl.

5th Spec. A brave end : not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial
Is closed. No—Strafford means to speak again ?

An Officer. Stand back, there !

5th Spec. Why, the Earl is coming hither !
Before the court breaks up ! His brother, look,—
You'd say he'd deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.

An Officer. Stand back, I say !

2nd Spec. Who's the veiled woman that he talks
with ?

Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl ! the Earl !

[*Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, and other Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, etc. STRAFFORD converses with Lady CARLISLE.*]

Hol. So near the end ! Be patient—
Return !

Straf. [*To his Secretaries.*] Here—anywhere—or, 'tis
freshest here !

To spend one's April here, the blossom-month :
Set it down here ! [*They arrange a table, papers, etc.*]

So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more's to do ?
What's to be answered, Slingsby ? Let us end !
[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Child, I refuse his offer ; whatso-
e'er

It be ! Too late ! Tell me no word of him !
'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you that—

To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days
 Fighting for life and fame against a pack
 Of very curs, that lie through thick and thin,
 Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say
 "Strafford" if it would take my life!

Lady Car.

Be moved!

Glance at the paper!

Straf.

Already at my heels!

Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.
 Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!

*[Messengers from LANE and other of STRAF-
 FORD'S Counsel within the Hall are coming
 and going during the Scene.]*

Straf. *[setting himself to write and dictate.]* I shall beat
 you, Hollis!

Do you know that? In spite of St. John's tricks,
 In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank from me!
 Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.

[To a Messenger.] In truth? This slip, tell Lane, con-
 tains as much

As I can call to mind about the matter.

Eliot would have disdained . . .

[Calling after the Messenger.] And Radcliffe, say,
 The only person who could answer Pym,
 Is safe in prison, just for that.

Well, well!

It had not been recorded in that case,
 I baffled you.

[To Lady CARLISLE.] Nay, child, why look so grieved?
 All's gained without the King! You saw Pym
 quail?

What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,
 But tranquilly resume my task as though
 Nothing had intervened since I proposed
 To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,
 Trust me, shall not be played a second time,
 Not even against Laud, with his grey hair—
 Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To make amends,

You, Lucy, shall be here when I impeach
Pym and his fellows.

Hol. Wherefore not protest
Against our whole proceeding, long ago ?
Why feel indignant now ? Why stand this while
Enduring patiently ?

Straf. Child, I'll tell you—
You, and not Pym—you, the slight graceful girl
Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis—
Why I stood patient ! I was fool enough
To see the will of England in Pym's will ;
To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait
Her judgment : when, behold, in place of it . . .
[*To a Messenger who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer no
such question ! Law,—

I grapple with their law ! I'm here to try
My actions by their standard, not my own !
Their law allowed that levy : what's the rest
To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me ?

Lady Car. The King's so weak ! Secure this chance !
'Twas Vane,

Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

Straf. Fit,—very fit, those precious notes of Vane,
To close the Trial worthily ! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
And spoil the character of all the past.
Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say
As much—to Pym, to England ! Follow me !
I have a word to say ! There, my defence
Is done !

Stay ! why be proud ? Why care to own
My gladness, my surprise ?—Nay, not surprise !
Wherefore insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself, and sparing him
The pain ? Child, say the triumph is my King's !
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,
One image was before me : could I fail ?
Child, care not for the past, so indistinct,

Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it
 'Tis so forgotten ! From this day begins
 A new life, founded on a new belief
 In Charles.

Hol. In Charles ? Rather, believe in Pym !
 And here he comes in proof ! Appeal to Pym !
 Say how unfair . . .

Straf. To Pym ? I would say nothing !
 I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Car. Stay, let me have to think I pressed your
 hand !

[STRAFFORD and his friends go out.]

Enter HAMPDEN and VANE

Vane. O Hampden, save the great misguided man !
 Plead Strafford's cause with Pym ! I have remarked
 He moved no muscle when we all declaimed
 Against him : you had but to breathe—he turned
 Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter PYM, the Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, the
 Managers of the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, etc.*

Rud. Horrible !
 Till now all hearts were with you : I withdraw
 For one. Too horrible ! But we mistake
 Your purpose, Pym : you cannot snatch away
 The last spar from the drowning man.

Fien. He talks
 With St. John of it—see, how quietly !
 [To other Presbyterians.] You'll join us ? Strafford
 may deserve the worst :

But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart !
 This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
 One true man's hand to it.

Vane. Consider, Pym !
 Confront your Bill, your own Bill : what is it ?
 You cannot catch the Earl on any charge,—
 No man will say the law has hold of him.

On any charge ; and therefore you resolve
To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met
To found one. You refer to Parliament
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass
Of half-borne-out assertions, dubious hints
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions—ay,
And wild inventions. Every man is saved
The task of fixing any single charge
On **Strafford** : he has but to see in him
The enemy of England.

Pym. A right scruple !
I have heard some called England's enemy
With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me !
Indeed you make me think I was your friend !
I who have murdered **Strafford**, how remove
That memory from me ?

Pym. I absolve you, *Vane*.
Take you no care for aught that you have done !

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill ! Reject this Bill !
He staggers through the ordeal : let him go,
Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !
When **Strafford** spoke, your eyes were thick with tears !

Hamp. England speaks louder : who are we, to play
The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill ?

Vane. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fien. And England trusts you.

Hamp. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean account—
Who would look nobly frank at her expense !

Fien. I never thought it could have come to this.

Pym. But I have made myself familiar, *Fiennes*,
With this one thought—have walked, and sat, and slept,

This thought before me. I have done such things,
 Being the chosen man that should destroy
 The traitor. You have taken up this thought
 To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
 To give a dignity to idler life
 By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
 But ever with the softening, sure belief,
 That all would end some strange way right at last.

Fien. Had we made out some weightier charge !

Pym.

You say

That these are petty charges : can we come
 To the real charge at all ? There he is safe
 In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
 Is not a crime, treachery not a crime :
 The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak
 The words, but where's the power to take revenge
 Upon them ? We must make occasion serve,—
 The oversight shall pay for the main sin
 That mocks us.

Rud. But this unexampled course,
 This Bill !

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
 Of precedent and custom, and at once
 Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
 The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
 The guilt of Strafford : each man lay his hand
 Upon his breast, and judge !

Vane. I only see
 Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond !

Rud. and others. Forgive him ! He would join us,
 now he finds

What the King counts reward ! The pardon, too,
 Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford
 The pardon of the Commons.

Pym. Meet him ? Strafford ?
 Have we to meet once more, then ? Be it so !
 And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
 When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,

Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time . . . 'Tis very sad !
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane—to-morrow ?

Vane. Not before to-morrow—
So, time enough ! I knew you would relent !

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me !

SCENE III.—*Whitehall*

The KING

Cha. My loyal servant ! To defend himself
Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us !

We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the future
Must recompense the past.

She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now !

The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me. 'Twas too precipitate :
Before the army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large : no matter.

Well, Carlisle ?

Enter PYM

Pym. Fear me not, sir :—my mission is to save,
This time.

Cha. To break thus on me ! Unannounced !

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Cha. No more
Of Strafford ! I have heard too much from you.

Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People ; will you hear

A word upon my own account ?

Cha.

Of Strafford ?

(So turns the tide already ? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler ?—Strafford's eloquence
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.

Pym.

Sufficiently.

I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take : the Trial fails.

Cha.

Yes, yes :

We are aware, sir : for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym.

Pray you, read

This schedule ! I would learn from your own
mouth

—(It is a matter much concerning me)—

Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. That Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.

Cha.

You can hinder, then,

The introduction of this Bill ?

Pym.

I can.

Cha. He is my friend, sir : I have wronged him :
mark you,

Had I not wronged him, this might be. You think
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,
We know you hate him)—no one else could love
Strafford : but he has saved me, some affirm.
Think of his pride ! And, do you know one strange,
One frightful thing ? We all have used the man
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us ; and yet

Strafford has wife and children, household cares,
Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause—to England if you will !

Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to England ! Draw not
back !

Cha. Prevent that Bill, sir ! All your course seems
fair

Till now. Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign
The warrant for his death ! You have said much
I ponder on ; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I take
The Commons' counsel ; but this Bill is yours—
Nor worthy of its leader : care not, sir,
For that, however ! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied ?

Pym. Listen to me, sir ! Eliot laid his hand,
Wasted and white upon my forehead once ;
Wentworth—he's gone now !—has talked on, whole
nights,
And I beside him ; Hampden loves me : sir,
How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well ?

Cha. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir !

Pym. Let me speak !
—Who may not speak again ; whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day :
—Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.
I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man—
I might say something, warn you, pray you, save—
Mark me, King Charles, save—you !
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir—
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved

—"How long the Many must endure the One,"
Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere !
Or——

Cha. God forsakes me. I am in a net
And cannot move. Let all be as you say !

Enter Lady CARLISLE

Lady Car. He loves you—looking beautiful with joy
Because you sent me ! he would spare you all
The pain ! he never dreamed you would forsake
Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
Your scheme returned ! That generous heart of his !
He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you—you, sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

[*Seeing Pym.*] Well met !
No fear for Strafford ! All that's true and brave
On your own side shall help us : we are now
Stronger than ever.

Ha—what, sir, is this ?
All is not well ! What parchment have you there ?

Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.

Lady Car. This Bill ! Your lip
Whitens—you could not read one line to me
Your voice would falter so !

Pym. No recreant yet !
The great word went from England to my soul,
And I arose. The end is very near.

Lady Car. I am to save him ! All have shrunk
beside ;
'Tis only I am left. Heaven will make strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let both die !

ACT V

SCENE I.—*Whitehall*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE

Hol. Tell the King then ! Come in with me !

Lady Car.

Not so !

He must not hear till it succeeds.

Hol.

Succeed ?

No dream was half so vain—you'd rescue Strafford
And outwit Pym ! I cannot tell you . . . lady,
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.

To-day . . . is it to-day ? And all the while
He's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have
To tell this man he is to die. The King

May rend his hair, for me ! I'll not see Strafford !

Lady Car. Only, if I succeed, remember—Charles
Has saved him ! He would hardly value life
Unless his gift. My staunch friends wait. Go in—
You must go in to Charles !

Hol.

And all beside

Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed
The warrant for his death : the Queen was sick
Of the eternal subject. For the Court,—

The Trial was amusing in its way,
Only too much of it : the Earl withdrew

In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young,
Amid rude mercenaries—you devise

A plan to save him ! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you ?

Lady Car.

I may go, you think,

To France with him ? And you reward me, friend,
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth

Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his.

I have learned somewhat of his latter life,
 And all the future I shall know : but, Hollis,
 I ought to make his youth my own as well.
 Tell me,——when he is saved !

Hol. My gentle friend,
 He should know all and love you, but 'tis vain !

Lady Car. Love ? no—too late now ! Let him love
 the King !

'Tis the King's scheme ! I have your word, remember !

We'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick !

Quick ! Each of us has work to do, beside !

Go to the King ! I hope—Hollis—I hope !

Say nothing of my scheme ! Hush, while we speak

Think where he is ! Now for my gallant friends !

Hol. Where he is ? Calling wildly upon Charles,
 Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.

Let the King tell him ! I'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II.—*The Tower*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his Children. They sing*

*O bell' andare
 Per barca in mare,
 Verso la sera
 Di Primavera !*

William. The boat's in the broad moonlight all this
 while—

*Verso la sera
 Di Primavera !*

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
 Into the shadowy distance ; only still
 You hear the dipping oar—

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all's quite gone,
 Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father : you were to sleep.

Straf. I do sleep, Anne ; or if not—you must know
There's such a thing as . . .

Wil. You're too tired to sleep ?

Straf. It will come by-and-by and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of :

We sleep safe there.

Anne. Why not in Ireland ?

Straf. No !

Too many dreams !—That song's for Venice, William :

You know how Venice looks upon the map—

Isles that the mainland hardly can let go ?

Wil. You've been to Venice, father ?

Straf. I was young, then.

Wil. A city with no King ; that's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice.

Straf. William !

Wil. Oh, I know why ! Anne, do you love the King ?
But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

Straf. See many lands, boy—England last of all,—
That way you'll love her best.

Wil. Why do men say
You sought to ruin her, then ?

Straf. Ah,—they say that.

Wil. Why ?

Straf. I suppose they must have words to say,
As you to sing.

Anne. But they make songs beside :
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names !

Wil. Don't mind her, father !
They soon left off when I cried out to them.

Straf. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy !
'Tis not worth while : who heeds a foolish song ?

Wil. Why, not the King.

Straf. Well : it has been the fate
Of better ; and yet,—wherefore not feel sure
That time, who in the twilight comes to mend

All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
 To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
 And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
 That time will do me right ?

Anne.

(Shall we sing, William ?

He does not look thus when we sing.)

Straf.

For Ireland,

Something is done : too little, but enough
 To show what might have been.

Wil.

(I have no heart

To sing now ! Anne, how very sad he looks !

Oh, I so hate the King for all he says !)

Straf. Forsook them ! What, the common songs will
 run

That I forsook the People ? Nothing more ?

Ay, fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,

Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves

Noisy to be enrolled,—will register

The curious glosses, subtle notices,

Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see

Beside that plain inscription of The Name—

The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford !

[*The Children resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant

Straf. No,—Hollis ? in good time !—Who is he ?

Hol.

One

That must be present.

Straf.

Ah—I understand.

They will not let me see poor Laud alone.

How politic ! They'd use me by degrees

To solitude : and just as you came in

I was solicitous what life to lead

When Strafford's "not so much as Constable

In the King's service." Is there any means

To keep one's self awake ? What would you do

After this bustle, Hollis, in my place ?

Hol. *Strafford* !

Straf. Observe, not but that Pym and you
Will find me news enough—news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
My newsman. Or, a better project now—
What if when all's consummated, and the Saints
Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly,—
What if I venture up, some day, unseen,
To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,
Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,
As, whether *Strafford's* name were John or James—
And be myself appealed to—I, who shall
Myself have near forgotten !

Hol.

I would speak . . .

Straf. Then you shall speak,—not now. I want just
now,
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
Is full of ghosts.

Hol.

Nay, you must hear me, *Strafford* !

Straf. Oh, readily ! Only one rare thing more,—
The minister ! Who will advise the King,
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
And yet have health—children, for aught I know—
My patient pair of traitors ! Ah,—but, William—
Does not his cheek grow thin ?

Wil.

'Tis you look thin,

Father !

Straf. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to rights.

Hol.

You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, *Strafford* ?

Straf.

No,

Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, *Hollis* ? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free !
A mask at *Theobald's* ?

Hol. Hold : no such affair .
 Detains him.

Straf. True : what needs so great a matter ?
 The Queen's lip may be sore. Well : when he pleases,—
 Only, I want the air : it vexes flesh
 To be pent up so long.

Hol. The King—I bear
 His message, Strafford : pray you, let me speak !

Straf. Go, William ! Anne, try o'er your song again !
[The Children retire.]

They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
 I know your message : you have nothing new
 To tell me : from the first I guessed as much.
 I know, instead of coming here himself,
 Leading me forth in public by the hand,
 The King prefers to leave the door ajar
 As though I were escaping—bids me trudge
 While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
 On the other side of the river ! Give at once
 His order of release ! I've heard, as well
 Of certain poor manoeuvres to avoid
 The granting pardon at his proper risk ;
 First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
 Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
 Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
 And far from blaming them, and . . . Where's the order ?

Hol. Spare me !

Straf. Why, he'd not have me steal away ?
 With an old doublet and a steeple hat
 Like Prynne's ? Be smuggled into France, perhaps ?
 Hollis, 'tis for my children ! 'Twas for them
 I first consented to stand day by day
 And give your Puritans the best of words,
 Be patient, speak when called upon, observe
 Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie !
 What's in that boy of mine that he should prove
 Son to a prison-breaker ? I shall stay
 And he'll stay with me. Charles should know as much,

He too has children !

[*Turning to HOLLIS'S companion.*] Sir, you feel for me !
No need to hide that face ! Though it have looked
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks.
For there is one who comes not.

Hol.

Whom forgive,

As one to die !

Straf. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness : I forgive him from my soul.

Hol. 'Tis a world's wonder : Strafford, you must die !

Straf. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha ! Tears in truth ?
We'll end this ! See this paper, warm—feel—warm
With lying next my heart ! Whose hand is there ?
Whose promise ? Read, and loud for God to hear !
" Strafford shall take no hurt "—read it, I say !
" In person, honour, nor estate "—

Hol.

The King . . .

Straf. I could unking him by a breath ! You sit
Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I'd renounce the King : and I stood firm
On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .

Hol.

To sign

The warrant for your death.

Straf. " Put not your trust
In princes, neither in the sons of men,
In whom is no salvation ! "

Hol.

Trust in God !

The scaffold is prepared : they wait for you :
He has consented. Cast the earth behind !

Cha. You would not see me, Strafford, at your
foot !

It was wrung from me ! Only curse me not !

Hol. [*To STRAFFORD.*] As you hope grace and pardon
in your need,

Be merciful to this most wretched man !

[*Voices from within.*]

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera.*

Straf. You'll be good to those children, sir ? I know
You'll not believe her, even should the Queen
Think they take after one they rarely saw.
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters : but you are
So utterly deprived of friends ! He too
Must serve you—will you not be good to him ?
Or, stay, sir, do not promise—do not swear !
You, Hollis—do the best you can for me !
I've not a soul to trust to : Wandesford's dead,
And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next :
I've found small time of late for my affairs,
But I trust any of you, Pym himself—
No one could hurt them : there's an infant, too—
These tedious cares ! Your Majesty could spare them !
Nay—pardon me, my King ! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness : there escaped a peevish word—
'Tis gone : I bless you at the last. You know
All's between you and me : what has the world
To do with it ? Farewell !

Cha. [*at the door.*] Balfour ! Balfour !

Enter BALFOUR

The Parliament !—go to them : I grant all
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent :
Tell them to keep their money if they will :
I'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat : only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose !
—You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside !

Bal. Your Majesty may hear them now :
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out :
Please you retire !

Cha. Take all the troops, Balfour !

Bal. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

Cha. Come with me, Strafford ! You'll not fear, at least !

Straf. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this !
I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,
The King was sorry : 'tis no shame in him :
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir !
Earth fades, heaven breaks on me : I shall stand
next

Before God's throne : the moment's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its maker, leave
To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you ? Be saved
Through me ! Bear witness, no one could prevent
My death ! Lead on ! ere he awake—best, now !
All must be ready : did you say, Balfour,
The crowd began to murmur ? They'll be kept
Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's !
Now ! but tread softly—children are at play
In the next room. Precede ! I follow—

Enter Lady CARLISLE, with many Attendants

Lady Car. Me !
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved ! The King ?

[*To the KING.*] Well—as you ordered, they are ranged
without,

The convoy . . . [*seeing the KING's state.*]

[*To STRAFFORD.*] You know all, then ! Why, I thought
It looked best that the King should save you, Charles
Alone ; 'tis a shame that you should owe me aught.
Or no, not shame ! Strafford, you'll not feel shame
At being saved by me ?

Hol. All true ! Oh Strafford,
She saves you ! all her deed ! this lady's deed !
And is the boat in readiness ? You, friend,
Are Billingsley, no doubt ! Speak to her, Strafford !
See how she trembles, waiting for your voice !
The world's to learn its bravest story yet !

Lady Car. Talk afterward ! Long nights in France
enough,

To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.

Straf. You love me, child ? Ah, Strafford can be
loved

As well as Vane ! I could escape, then ?

Lady Car. Haste !
Advance the torches, Bryan !

Straf. I will die.
They call me proud : but England had no right,
When she encountered me—her strength to mine—
To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,
I fought her to the utterance, I fell,
I am hers now, and I will die. Beside,
The lookers-on ! Eliot is all about
This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.

Lady Car. Strafford !
Straf. I think if you could know how much
I love you, you would be repaid, my friend !

Lady Car. Then, for my sake !
Straf. Even for your sweet sake,
I stay.

Hol. For *their* sake !

Straf. To bequeath a stain ?

Leave me ! Girl, humour me and let me die ?

Lady Car. Bid him escape—wake, King ! Bid him escape !

Straf. True, I will go ! Die, and forsake the King ?
I'll not draw back from the last service.

Lady Car. Strafford !

Straf. And, after all, what is disgrace to me ?
Let us come, child ! That it should end this way !
Lead then ! but I feel strangely : it was not
To end this way.

Lady Car. Lean—lean on me !

Straf. My King !
Oh, had he trusted me—his friend of friends !

Lady Car. I can support him, Hollis !

Straf. Not this way !
This gate—I dreamed of it, this very gate.

Lady Car. It opens on the river : our good boat
Is moored below, our friends are there.

Straf. The same :
Only with something ominous and dark,
Fatal, inevitable.

Lady Car. Strafford ! Strafford !

Straf. Not by this gate ! I feel what will be there !
I dreamed of it, I tell you : touch it not !

Lady Car. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the
King !

[*As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, etc. STRAFFORD falls back : PYM follows slowly and confronts him.*

Pym. Have I done well ? Speak, England ! Whose
sole sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up
Her sacrifice—this friend, this Wentworth here—
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,

I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
Would never leave him : I do leave him now.
I render up my charge (be witness, God !)
To England who imposed it. I have done
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be,
With ill effects—for I am weak, a man :
Still, I have done my best, my human best,
Not faltering for a moment. It is done.
And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say
I never loved but one man—David not
More Jonathan ! Even thus, I love him now :
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon :
My mission over, I shall not live long,)—
Ay, here I know I talk—I dare and must,
Of England, and her great reward, as all
I look for there ; but in my inmost heart,
Believe, I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth—my youth's
friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .
This is no meeting, Wentworth ! Tears increase
Too hot. A thin mist—is it blood ?—enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be !
Straf. I have loved England too ; we'll meet then,
Pym ;
As well die now ! Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course :
Manhood with action follows ; but 'tis dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone ! As well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right—not now !

Best die. Then if there's any fault, it too
Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,
In some blind corner. And there's no one left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym !
And yet, I know not : I shall not be there :
Friends fail—if he have any. And he's weak,
And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is
nothing—

Nothing ! But not that awful head—not that !

Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .

Straf. Pym, you help England ! I, that am to die,
What I must see ! 'tis here—all here ! My God,
Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell !
What ? England that you help, become through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym—
Some who, without that, still must ever wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young ! No word ?
What if I curse you ? Send a strong curse forth
Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror till
She's fit with her white face to walk the world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and you—
Then to sit down with you at the board-head,
The gathering for prayer . . . O speak, but speak !
. . . Creep up and quietly follow each one home,
You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with,—hardly moaning in his dreams,
She gnaws so quietly,—till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away !
Oh shall you 'scape with less if she's my child ?
You will not say a word—to me—to Him ?

Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .

Straf. No, not for England now, not for Heaven
now,—

See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you !

There, I will thank you for the death, my friend !

This is the meeting : let me love you well !

Pym. England, — I am thine own ! Dost thou
exact

That service ? I obey thee to the end.

Straf. O God, I shall die first—I shall die first !

PIPPA PASSES

PIPPA PASSES

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN. *A large, mean, airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY !

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay ;
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid grey
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the
world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above
measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy
pleasure)
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—

Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine ! But thou must treat me not
As the prosperous are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest ;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow :
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less :
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's !
Try now ! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima ; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage ? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek ; how should she mind the storm ?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves ? 'Tis their marriage-day ;
And while they leave church and go home their way,
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content ? The cheerful town, warm, close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,

Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace ?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil !

And here I let time slip for nought !
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
With a single splash from my ewer !
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep ?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing :
Now grow together on the ceiling !
That will task your wits.
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple ?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon ?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll !
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers ; I say, such lamps disperse
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe !
I am queen of thee, floweret !
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom)

—From weevil and chafer ?

Laugh through my pane then ; solicit the bee ;

Gibe him, be sure ; and, in midst of thy glee,

Love thy queen, worship me !

—Worship whom else ? For am I not, this day,

Whate'er I please ? What shall I please to-day ?

My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day ?

To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,

The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk :

But, this one day, I have leave to go, .

And play out my fancy's fullest games ;

I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—

That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names

Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo !

See ! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the morning,

Some one shall love me, as the world calls love :

I am no less than Ottima, take warning !

The gardens, and the great stone house above,

And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,

Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,

To court me, while old Luca yet reposes :

And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,

I . . . what now ?—give abundant cause for prate

About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,

Too bold, too confident she'll still face down

The spitefullest of talkers in our town.

How we talk in the little town below !

But love, love, love—there's better love, I know !

This foolish love was only day's first offer ;

I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :

For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally

Out of Possagno church at noon ?

Their house looks over Orcana valley :

Why should not I be the bride as soon

As Ottima ? For I saw, beside,

Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash ;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses !
—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules ! For are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature ?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead :
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee !
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss ?
Oh, no—not envy, this !

—Not envy, sure !—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me ?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning ;
As little fear of losing it as winning :
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret ; what prevents
My being Luigi ? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk

Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
 Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
 Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
 —Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
 And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm ;
 Let me be Luigi ! If I only knew
 What was my mother's face—my father, too !
 Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
 Is God's ; then why not have God's love befall
 Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,
 Monsignor ?—who to-night will bless the home
 Of his dead brother ; and God will bless in turn
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
 With love for all men : I, to-night at least
 Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait !—even I already seem to share
 In God's love : what does New-year's hymn declare ?
 What other meaning do these verses bear ?

*All service ranks the same with God :
 If now, as formerly he trod
 Paradise, his presence fills
 Our earth, each only as God wills
 Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
 Are we ; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not " a small event ! " Why " small ? "
 Costs it more pain than this, ye call
 A " great event," should come to pass,
 Than that ? Untwine me from the mass
 Of deeds which make up life, one deed
 Power shall fall short in or exceed !*

And more of it, and more of it !—oh yes—
 I will pass each, and see their happiness,
 And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they !

A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday !
But let the sun shine ! Wherefore repine ?
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass-path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
No, dared carouse ! [*She enters the street.*]

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.*
LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German
SEBALD.

*Seb. [sings] Let the watching lids wink !
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think !
Deep into the night, drink !*

Otti. Night ? Such may be your Rhine-land nights
perhaps ;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
—We call such light, the morning : let us see !
Mind how you grope your way, though ! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle ! Push the lattice
Behind that frame !—Nay, do I bid you ?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me ! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil ?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald ! Is it full morning ?
Oh, don't speak then !

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be !
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day ; I observed that, as I strolled
On mornings through the vale here ; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills :
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye !

And wisely : you were plotting one thing there,
 Nature, another outside. I looked up—
 Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
 Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
 Oh, I remember !—and the peasants laughed
 And said, " The old man sleeps with the young wife."
 This house was his, this chair, this window—his !

Otti. Ah, the clear morning ! I can see St. Mark's :
 That black streak is the belfry. Stop : Vicenza
 Should lie . . . there's Padua, plain enough, that blue !
 Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger !

Seb. Morning ?
 It seems to me a night with a sun added.
 Where's dew, where's freshness ? That bruised plant,
 I bruised
 In getting through the lattice yestereve,
 Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark
 In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh, shut the lattice, pray !
Seb. Let me lean out ! I cannot scent blood here,
 Foul as the morn may be.
 There, shut the world out !
 How do you feel now, Ottima ? There, curse
 The world and all outside ! Let us throw off
 This mask : how do you bear yourself ? Let's out
 With all of it !

Otti. Best never speak of it.
Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,
 Till words cease to be more than words. " His blood,"
 For instance—let those two words mean " His blood "
 And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,
 " His blood."

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
 The deed—
Seb. Repent ? Who should repent, or why ?
 What puts that in your head ? Did I once say
 That I repented ?

Otti. No, I said the deed . . .

Seb. "The deed," and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant !
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

Otti. Here is the wine ;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black ? White
then ?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat ? What are you ?

Otti. There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet ; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.
I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used :
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald ?

Seb. No, the white wine—the white wine !
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way ;
Nor does it rise : pour on ! To your black eyes !
Do you remember last damned New Year's day ?

Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked
at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.

Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.

Otti. Do you
Fondle me then ! Who means to take your life
For that, my Sebald ?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima !
One thing to guard against. We'll not make much

One of the other—that is, not make more
 Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
 Than yesterday : as if, sweet, I supposed
 Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,
 To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you
 In spite of Luca and what's come to him
 —Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
 White sneering old reproachful face and all !
 We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
 We still could lose each other, were not tied
 By this : conceive you ?

Otti.

Love !

Seb.

Not tied so sure !

Because though I was wrought upon, have struck
 His insolence back into him—am I
 So surely yours ?—therefore forever yours ?

Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
 Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,
 For instance that May morning we two stole
 Under the green ascent of sycamores—
 If we had come upon a thing like that
 Suddenly . . .

Seb.

“ A thing ”—there again—“ a thing ! ”

Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
 My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
 Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
 Would you have pored upon it ? Why persist
 In poring now upon it ? For 'tis here
 As much as there in the deserted house :
 You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
 Now he is dead I hate him worse : I hate . . .
 Dare you stay here ? I would go back and hold
 His two dead hands, and say, “ I hate you worse,
 Luca, than . . . ”

Seb.

Off, off—take your hands off mine !
 'Tis the hot evening—off ! oh, morning is it ?

Otti. There's one thing must be done ; you know what
 thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Seb. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is ? Let him lie there until
The angels take him ! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.

Otti. This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs ! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck ?
No—this way.

Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone ! Killing ? Kill the world,
So Luca lives again !—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would . . .

Otti. See !

Seb. No, I'll finish ! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all ?
All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer ; there's a recompense in guilt ;
One must be venturous and fortunate :
What is one young for, else ? In age we'll sigh
O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over ;
Still, we have lived : the vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way ?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you plucked me
These flowers to smell !

Otti. My poor lost friend !

Seb. He gave me
Life, nothing less : what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—

Had he no right ? What was to wonder at ?
 He sat by us at table quietly :
 Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched ?
 Could he do less than make pretence to strike ?
 'Tis not the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes
 Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone !
 And you—O how feel you ? Feel you for me ?

Otti. Well then, I love you better now than ever,
 And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
 Best for the crime ; nor do I grieve, in truth,
 This mask, this simulated ignorance,
 This affectation of simplicity,
 Falls off our crime ; this naked crime of ours
 May not now be looked over : look it down then !
 Great ? let it be great ; but the joys it brought,
 Pay they or no its price ? Come : they or it !
 Speak not ! The past, would you give up the past
 Such as it is, pleasure and crime together ?
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you ?
 The garden's silence ! even the single bee
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped :
 And where he hid you only could surmise
 By some campanula chalice set a-swing :
 Who stammered—" Yes, I love you ? "

Seb. And I drew
 Back ; put far back your face with both my hands
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body !

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,
 Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Seb. When
 I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
 Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
 To a yellow haze ?

Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
 Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
 Nipped by the first frost.

Seb. You would always laugh

At my wet boots : I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.

Otti. Then our crowning night !

Seb. The July night ?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald !

When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came !

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect ;
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead ;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me : then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes !

Otti. —While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you !

Seb. Slower, Ottima !

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently ! Love me !

Forgive me ! Take not words, mere words, to heart !
Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe slow, speak
slow !

Do not lean on me !

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,

Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, " Let death come now ! 'Tis right to die !
Right to be punished ! Nought completes such bliss
But woe ! " Who said that ?

Seb. How did we ever rise ?

Was't that we slept ? Why did it end ?

Otti. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now : knot it again !

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now !
This way ? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen ?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow ;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that !

Seb. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn ;
Morning's at seven ;
The hill-side's dew-pearled ;
The lark's on the wing ;
The snail's on the thorn :
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world !*

[PIPPA *passes*.]

Seb. God's in his heaven ! Do you hear that ? Who
spoke ?
You, you spoke !

Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl !
She must have rested on the step : we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside ?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh !
She does not hear : call you out louder !

Seb. Leave me !
Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders !
Otti. Sebald ?

Seb. Wipe off that paint ! I hate you.

Otti.

Miserable !

Seb. My God, and she is emptied of it now !
Outright now !—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange grace once ?
Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,
No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places : and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web !

Otti.

Speak to me—not of me !

Seb. —That round great full-orbed face, where not an
angle
Broke the delicious indolence—all broken !

Otti. To me—not of me ! Ungrateful, perjured cheat !
A coward too : but ingrate's worse than all !
Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie !
Leave me ! Betray me ! I can see your drift !
A lie that walks and eats and drinks !

Seb.

My God !

Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood beneath !

Otti. You hate me then ? You hate me then ?*Seb.*

To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, and show herself
Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence ! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick ! I see what I have done,
Entirely now ! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price !
I hate, hate—curse you ! God's in his heaven !

Otti.

— Me !

Me ! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me !

Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then
 Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak !
 I always meant to kill myself—wait, you !
 Lean on my breast—not as a breast ; don't love me
 The more because you lean on me, my own
 Heart's Sebald ! There, there, both deaths presently !

Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned : all I
 feel

Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
 A hurry-down within me, as of waters
 Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit :
 They—they go—whirls from a black fiery sea !
Otti. Not me—to him, O God, be merciful !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hill-side
 to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture,
 from Venice, assembled opposite the house of
 JULES, a young French Statuary, at Possagno.*

1st Student. Attention ! My own post is beneath this
 window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide
 three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm
 and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—
 who's a defaulter ? We want everybody, for Jules must
 not be suffered to hurt his bride when the ject's found
 out.

2nd Stud. All here ! Only our poet's away—never
 having much meant to be present, moonstrike him !
 The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino ! He was in
 violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of
 thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when sud-
 denly a woman falls in love with him, too ; and out of
 pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal
 poem and all : whereto is this prophetic epitaph
 appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—“ *Here
 a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*”
 His own fault, the simpleton ! Instead of cramp

couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly. —*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs : Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3rd. Stud. Subside, my fine fellow ! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Stud. Good !—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino !

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer ? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by : I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably !—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers !—so he was heard to call us all : now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know ? Am I heartless ?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless ; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it ?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter ? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning : there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour !

Gott. See here ! “ He has been accustomed,” he writes, “ to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's women beside him, in flesh ; these being as much below, as those, above his soul's aspiration : but now he is to have the reality.” There you laugh again ! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm ! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody !) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth ?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world : look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time ; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue ? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on ! Has a man done wondering at women ?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men ?—there's God to wonder at : and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again ! There, you see ! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day ! Canova's gallery—you know : there he marches first resolutely past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye : all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—“ In your new

place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!” Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova’s practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Stud. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Stud. Why, on that matter, he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron’s “hair like sea-moss”—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a

creature ! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress : and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch ! I concocted the main of it : relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united ? St—st—Here they come !

6th Stud. Both of them ! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves !

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom ! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it : and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy !—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Stud. And the bride ! Yes, sure enough, our Phene ! Should you have known her in her clothes ? How magnificently pale !

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope ?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is ! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules ?

Gott. How he gazes on her ! Pity—pity !

1st Stud. They go in : now, silence ! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate : just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated !

II.—NOON. *Over Orcana. The house of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE ; she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene ! I am yours now, you
Are mine now ; let fate reach me how she likes,

If you'll not die : so, never die ! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front ; they turn
Like an entire flower upward : eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns : 'tis their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved !

You by me,

And I by you ; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit : all's true. Thank God !
I have spoken : speak, you !

O my life to come !

My Tydeus must be carved that's there in clay ;
Yet how be carved, with you about the room ?
Where must I place you ? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you ! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone ?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me ?

Now speak !

Only first,

See, all your letters ! Was't not well contrived ?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe ; she keeps
Your letters next her skin : which drops out foremost ?
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world !

Again those eyes complete

Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds ; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too :
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing

O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy !
What gaze you at ? Those ? Books, I told you of ;
Let your first word to me rejoice them, too :
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl !
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude ;
*" He said, and on Antinous directed
A bitter shaft "* . . . a flower blots out the rest !
Again upon your search ? My statues, then !
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almain Kaiser, that,
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
This, rather, turn to ! What, unrecognized ?
I thought you would have seen that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then ? "*Carve in bold relief*" —
So you commanded—" carve, against I come,
A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
' Praise those who slew Hipparchus ! ' cry the guests,
' While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves
As erst above our champion : stand up, all ! ' "
See, I have laboured to express your thought.
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
Only consenting at the branch's end
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
The Praiser's, in the centre : who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine

From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a "well" to that—say "well!"
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves, and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked;
Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips?
—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
By the swift implement sent home at once,

Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track ?

Phene ? what—why is this ?
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes !
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die !

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end's coming ; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime ! Tush, why need I speak
Their foolish speech ? I cannot bring to mind
One half of it, beside ; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you—what are you ?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed : but can it ? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would ! We'll stay, then, as we are :
Above the world.

You creature with the eyes !
If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and
stay
—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes ! What rises is myself,
Not me the shame and suffering ; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
Above the world !

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered ! Stay—" I love you, love " . . .
I could prevent it if I understood :
More of your words to me : was't in the tone

Or the words, your power ?

Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you ! Only change
No more, and I shall find it presently
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low ;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of the world
And make of God a tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know !
But still Natalia said they were your friends,
And they assented though they smiled the more,
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest ;
He held a paper—“ What we want,” said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—
“ Is something slow, involved and mystical,
To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
And lure him on until, at innermost
Where he seeks sweetness’ soul, he may find—this !
—As in the apple’s core, the noisome fly :
For insects on the rind are seen at once,
And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
Only when on the lips or loathing tongue.”
And so he read what I have got by heart :
I’ll speak it,—“ Do not die, love ! I am yours ” . . .
No—is not that, or like that, part of words
Yourself began by speaking ? Strange to lose
What cost such pains to learn ! Is this more right ?

*I am a painter who cannot paint ;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,
 In my brain, as poor a creature too :
 No end to all I cannot do !
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man or hate a man
 Supremely : thus my lore began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In the lovingest spot to abide,
 And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
 I found Hate dwelling beside.
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride !)
 And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
 In the hatefullest nook to dwell ;
 But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
 Where the shadow threefold fell.
 (The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
 Not a painter's lip should tell !)*

“ And here,” said he, “ Jules probably will ask,
 ‘ You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,
 My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
 What needs some explanation ! What means this ? ’ ”
 —And I am to go on, without a word—

*So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
 From simple that I was of late.
 For once, when I loved, I would enlase
 Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
 Of her I loved, in one embrace—
 As if by mere love I could love immensely !
 And when I hated, I would plunge
 My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
 My foe's whole life out like a sponge—
 As if by mere hate I could hate intensely !
 But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
 How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion :
 And if I see cause to love more, hate more*

*Than ever man loved, ever hated before—
And seek in the Valley of Love,
The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may surely reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, the Love
Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.
When I love most, Love is disguised
In Hate ; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most : ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To reach thy heart, nor prick
The skin but pierce to the quick—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate !*

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche ! Who else ? But all of them, no doubt,
Hated me : they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however ! You I shall not meet :
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.

Keep

What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,
Consider ! and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.
This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
And books and medals, except . . . let them go
Together, so the produce keeps you safe
Out of Natalia's clutches !—If by chance
(For all's chance here) I should survive the gang
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

Give her but a least excuse to love me !

When—where—

How—can this arm establish her above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,

There already, to eternally reprove me ?

(" Hist ! "—said Kate the Queen ;

But " Oh "—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

" 'Tis only a page that carols unseen,

Crumbling your hounds their messes ! ")

*Is she wronged ?—To the rescue of her honour,
My heart !*

Is she poor ?—What costs it to be styled a donor ?

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.

But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her

(" Nay, list ! "—bade Kate the Queen ;

And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

" 'Tis only a page that carols unseen,

Fitting your hawks their jesses ! ")

[*PIPPA passes.*

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth ?
Kate ? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, " Kate the Queen—
She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
" Need him to help her ! "

Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us ;
Yet so we look ere we will love ; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blessed one, queen or page,

Why should we always choose the page's part ?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems !

How strange !

Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly.
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness :
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again !
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing ? This new soul is mine !

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do ?—save
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter ! I heard them
Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle !

I wanted silence only : there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art : the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream !
Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
What the whole world except our love—my own,
Own Phene ? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it ? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
And save him from my statue meeting him ?

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Like a god going through his world, there stands
 One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
 Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow :
 And you are ever by me while I gaze
 —Are in my arms as now—as now—as now !
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas !

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.

*Bluphocks.** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing ? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned :—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business ; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors : we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig !* In fact, I have abjured all religions ; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian : for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription ; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all ; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity : 'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,

* "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio !*) and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy ? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say—“ *How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “ *How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “ *How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*” In no wise ! “ *Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Purcha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen Goods !*” So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop ! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocket-full of *zwanzigers*) . . . *to pay the Stygian Ferry !*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then ; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while : not a shutter unclosed since morning !

2nd Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here : he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with ? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa !* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe

musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger* !
Leave this fooling, and look out : the afternoon's over
or nearly so.

3rd Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does
our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly ?
There ? What's there beside a simple signature ? (That
English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Pol. Flourish all round—" Put all possible ob-
stacles in his way ; " oblong dot at the end—" Detain
him till further advices reach you ; " scratch at bottom
—" Send him back on pretence of some informality in
the above ; " ink-spirt on right-hand side, (which is the
case here)—" Arrest him at once." Why and where-
fore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount
to this : if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna
—well and good, the passport deposed with us for our
visa is really for his own use, they have misinformed the
Office, and he means well ; but let him stay over to-
night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the
accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence
with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at
once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg.
Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough ! That is
he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—EVENING. *Inside the Turret on the Hill above A solo.*
LUIGI and his Mother entering.

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh,
easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway ?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up !
Hark—" Lucius Junius ! " The very ghost of a voice

Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those ?
 Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead ?
 They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
 That lean out of their topmost fortress—look
 And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
 Hand under chin of each grave earthy face :
 Up and show faces all of you !—“ All of you ! ”
 That’s the king dwarf with the scarlet comb ; old Franz,
 Come down and meet your fate ! Hark—“ Meet your
 fate ! ”

Mother. Let him not meet it, Luigi—do not
 Go to his City ! Putting crime aside,
 Half of these ills of Italy are feigned :
 Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
 Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush ! Say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.s and B.s write for effect, I say.
 Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
 Is silent ; you hear each petty injury,
 None of his virtues ; he is old beside,
 Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
 Do A. and B. not kill him themselves ?

Luigi. They teach
 Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
 Others to succeed ; now, if A. tried and failed,
 I could not teach that : mine’s the lesser task.
Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi ?
 Ah, will you let me tell you what you are ?

Luigi. Why not ? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
 You may assure yourself I say and say
 Ever to myself ! At times—nay, even as now
 We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect
 All is not sound : but is not knowing that,
 What constitutes one sane or otherwise ?
 I know I am thus—so, all is right again.
 I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
 And see men merry as if no Italy

Were suffering ; then I ponder—" I am rich,
 Young, healthy ; why should this fact trouble me,
 More than it troubles these ? " But it does trouble.
 No, trouble's a bad word : for as I walk
 There's springing and melody and giddiness,
 And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,
 Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
 Return to me—whatever may amuse me ;
 And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
 Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,
 The very cicala laughs " There goes he, and there !
 Feast him, the time is short ; he is on his way
 For the world's sake : feast him this once, our friend ! "
 And in return for all this, I can trip
 Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
 This evening, mother !

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
 Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him !

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right .

Mother. Mistrust your judgment, then, of the mere
 means

To this wild enterprise : say, you are right,—
 How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
 What would require a cool head, a cold heart
 And a calm hand ? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape ? To even wish that, would spoil all.
 The dying is best part of it. Too much
 Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
 To leave myself excuse for longer life :
 Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
 That I might finish with it ere my fellows
 Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay ?
 I was put at the board-head, helped to all
 At first ; I rise up happy and content.
 God must be glad one loves his world so much.
 I can give news of earth to all the dead
 Who ask me :—last year's sunsets, and great stars
 That had a right to come first and see ebb

The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul !

Mother. (He will not go !)

Luigi. You smile at me ? 'Tis true,—
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreath
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

Mother. See now : you reach the city, you must cross
His threshold—how ?

Luigi. Oh, that's if we conspired !
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve ; and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
In search of a distorted ash ?—I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
Arriving at the palace on my errand !
No, no ! I have a handsome dress packed up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair ;
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you ;
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all
Inside the turret here a hundred times.

Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe !
 But where they cluster thickest is the door
 Of doors ; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab
 Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
 'Whence he is bound and what's his business now.
 Walk in—straight up to him ; you have no knife :
 Be prompt, how should he scream ? Then, out with you !
 Italy, Italy, my Italy !

You're free, you're free ! Oh mother, I could dream
 They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
 Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave !

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
 The easiest virtue for a selfish man
 To acquire : he loves himself—and next, the world—
 If he must love beyond,—but nought between :
 As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
 His body and the sun above. But you
 Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
 To my least wish, and running o'er with love :
 I could not call you cruel or unkind.

Once more, your ground for killing him !—then go !

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport of me ?
 How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
 (If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
 —Never by conquest but by cunning, for
 That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well ?

Luigi. (Sure, he's arrived,
 The tell-tale cuckoo : spring's his confidant,
 And he lets out her April purposes !)
 Or . . . better go at once to modern time.
 He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand
 But can't restate the matter ; that's my boast :
 Others could reason it out to you, and prove
 Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night ?
 Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
 A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning star," saith
God—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."
The gift of the morning-star! Have I God's gift
Of the morning-star?

Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who live through
June!

Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.

Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?

Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!

[*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now:
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn
Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born:
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(The gods so loved him while he dreamed)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.*

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die !

*Among the rocks his city was :
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground ;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen, thickset brows :
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught
He was by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch !
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the sun !

*His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes
Where the very blue had turned to white.
'Tis said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge alway ;
But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear*

*To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun !*

[PIPPA passes.]

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the world ends !

The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach ?
'Tis God's voice calls : how could I stay ? Farewell !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Turret
to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo
S. Maria. Poor Girls sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout seafarer !

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish ; you, wish first !

2nd Girl.

I ? This sunset

To finish.

3rd Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly :
Since had he not himself been late this morning
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .
“ Eh, baggage, had I not ! ”—

2nd Girl.

How she can lie !

3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails !*2nd Girl.*

What makes your fingers red ?

3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words
with

On the bright table : how he laughed !

1st Girl.

My turn.

Spring's come and summer's coming. I would wear

A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,

With plaits here, close about the throat, all day ;

And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed ;

And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,

Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . ah, I should
say,

This is away in the fields—miles !

3rd Girl.

Say at once

You'd be at home : she'd always be at home !

Now comes the story of the farm among

The cherry orchards, and how April snowed

White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,

They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,

Made a dunghill of your garden !

1st Girl.

They, destroy

My garden since I left them ? well—perhaps !

I would have done so : so I hope they have !

A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall ;

They called it mine, I have forgotten why,

It must have been there long ere I was born :

Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead

Pricking the papers strung to flutter there

And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,

And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches ! Where was I ?—
before

She broke in with her wishes and long gowns

And wasps—would I be such a fool !—Oh, here !

This is my way : I answer every one

Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, “you love him”—straight “he’ll not be
gulled!”)

“He that seduced me when I was a girl
Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
Brown, red, white,”—as the case may be: that
pleases!

See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least!

1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

2nd Girl. When you were young? Nor are you
young, that’s true.

How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!
Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.

I wish they’d find a way to dye our hair

Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black: the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair!

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough.

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there’s no trusting him) to slice me
Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—
Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No, or she would sing.
For the Intendant said . . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I’ll tell you,—
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!

2nd Girl. [Sings]

You'll love me yet !—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing :
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now : some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet :
'Your look ?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death ? You'll love me yet !

3rd Girl. [To PIPPA, who approaches.] Oh you may come closer—we shall not eat you ! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—NIGHT. *Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR, dismissing his Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks ! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared ? *Benedicto benedicatur . . .* ugh, ugh ! Where was I ? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather : but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a goo of wax. But go, my friends, but go ! [To the

Intendant] Not you, Ugo ! [*The others leave the apartment.*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . 'guccio Stefani, man ! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno ;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh ! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts : take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree ? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me ?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother : fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back : they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below ! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments ! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both : he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter,—“ He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals ; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure : his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape : confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of

sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,"—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Mon. Ugo!

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forlì, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name,) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he?

Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Mon. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. "Forgive us our trespasses?"

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very

worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—N° 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever and whensoever.

Mon. Liar !

Inten. Strike me ? Ah, so might a father chastise ! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow ; for what a life did I lead ! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity ; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you !

Mon. I see through the trick, caitiff ! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me ! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die !

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death : let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand ; not the stupid obvious kind of killing ; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me ! I see her every day—saw her this morning : of course there is to be no killing ; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps ? 'Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present ; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'Tis as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody ; and once Pippa entangled !—you conceive ? Through her singing ? Is it a bargain ?

[*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet ;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know :
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet ?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand :
Nay I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges ;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.*

[*PIPPA passes.*

Mon. [Springing up.] My people—one and all—all—within there ! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot ! He dares . . . I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick ! *Miserere mei, Domine !* Quick, I say !

PIPPA'S Chamber again. *She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in its tomb,
Wile winter away ;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they ?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze !
“ Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze ”—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away !
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,

How fare they ?

No bidding me then to . . what did Zanze say ?

“ Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
More like ” . . (what said she ?)—“ and less like
canoes ! ”

How pert that girl was !—would I be those pert

Impudent staring women ! It had done me,

However, surely no such mighty hurt

To learn his name who passed that jest upon me :

No foreigner, that I can recollect,

Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect

Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings

Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.

Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,

We shall do better, see what next year brings !

I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear

More destitute than you perhaps next year !

Bluph . . . something ! I had caught the uncouth
name

But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter

Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter

As ours : it were indeed a serious matter

If silly talk like ours should put to shame

The pious man, the man devoid of blame,

The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,

No mere mortal has a right

To carry that exalted air ;

Best people are not angels quite :

While—not the worst of people's doings scare

The devil ; so there's that proud look to spare !

Which is mere counsel to myself, mind ! for

I have just been the holy Monsignor :

And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,

And you too, Luigi !—how that Luigi started

Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed

On some good errand or another,

For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,

And the sullen company that prowled

About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content.

Even my lily's asleep, I vow :
Wake up—here's a friend I've plucked you !
Call this flower a heart's-ease now !
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen ;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now ;
Call this pampered thing improved now !
Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
“ Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,”
Says he, “ Zanze from the Brenta,
I have made her gorge polenta
Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
As her . . . name there's no pronouncing !
See this heightened colour too,
For she swilled Breganze wine
Till her nose turned deep carmine ;
'Twas but white when wild she grew.
And only by this Zanze's eyes
Of which we could not change the size,
The magnitude of all achieved
Otherwise, may be perceived.”

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day !
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud ?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed !

Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
 Oh lark, be day's apostle
 To mavis, merle and throstle,
 Bid them their betters jostle
 From day and its delights !
 But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
 Toll the world to thy chantry ;
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
 Full complines with gallantry :
 Then, owls and bats, crows and twats,
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[*After she has begun to undress herself.*

Now, one thing I should like to really know :
 How near I ever might approach all these
 I only fancied being, this long day :
 —Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.
 For instance, if I wind
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[*Sitting on the bed-side.*

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
 Ah me, and my important part with them,
 This morning's hymn half promised when I rose !
 True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[*As she lies down.*

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

*All service ranks the same with God—
 With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
 Are we : there is no last nor first.*

[*She sleeps.*

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

CAVALIER TUNES

I. MARCHING ALONG

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous paroles !
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're—

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !
England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song ?*

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles !
Hold by the right, you double your might ;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

(Chorus) *March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

II. GIVE A ROUSE

King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !

Who gave me the goods that went since ?
 Who raised me the house that sank once ?
 Who helped me to gold I spent since ?
 Who found me in wine you drank once ?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !*

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him ?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !*

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
 Rescue my castle before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say ;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
 " God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "*

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array :
Who laughs, " Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
 (Chorus) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "

Who ? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, " Nay !
I've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?
 (Chorus) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "

CRISTINA

SHE should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her !
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them :
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

What ? To fix me thus meant nothing ?
But I can't tell (there's my weakness)
What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,
About " need to strew the bleakness
Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
That the sea feels "—no " strange yearning
That such souls have, most to lavish
Where there's chance of least returning."

Oh we're sunk enough here, God knows !
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing

Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse
Which for once had play unstifled
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis tasting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle ?

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it ;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together ?

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever :
Never fear but there's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture !
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture.

Such am I : the secret's mine now !
She has lost me, I have gained her ;
Her soul's mine ; and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended :
And then, come the next life quickly !
This world's use will have been ended.

“ HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX ”

[16—]

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;
“ Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
undrew ;
“ Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
place ;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, “ Yet there is time ! ”

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay
spur !
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix "—for one heard the quick
wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
chaff ;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight ! "

" How they'll greet us ! "—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without
peer ;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or
good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from
Ghent.

THE LOST LEADER

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote ;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed :
How all our copper had gone for his service !
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die !
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their
graves !
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !
(2,376)

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again !
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own ;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now !

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !

And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

• HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West
died away ;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, recking into Cadiz
Bay ;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;
In the dimmest North-East distance dawned Gibraltar
grand and grey ;
“ Here and here did England help me : how can I help
England ? ”—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

GARDEN FANCIES

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME

HERE's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since :
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box :
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.

Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by !
She loves you noble roses, I know ;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim ;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name :
What a name ! Was it love or praise ?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake ?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase ;
But do not detain me now ; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever !
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me ?

Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall !
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all !

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

Plague take all your pedants, say I !
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbut and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;
Added up the mortal amount ;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage ;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—I knew, at the bottom, rain-drippings stagnate ;
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;

Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo :
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis*,
Cantate ! quoth I, as I got a rake,
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow :
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks !
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow ?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six !

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover ?
—When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet ?

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
And clasps were cracking and covers suppling !

As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
Good bye, mother-beetle ; husband-eft, *sufficit* !
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf !
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

SONG

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;
To praise, you search the wide world over :
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her ?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much !

SAUL

I

SAID Abner, “ At last thou art come ! Ere I tell, ere
thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well ! ” Then I wished it,
and did kiss his cheek.

And he, " Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we ; nor until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II

" Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved ! God's child with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert ! "

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped ;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped ;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on

Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once
more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not
afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no
voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I
descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast,
the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into
sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed
Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched
out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to
each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in
his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily
hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark,
blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine
round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those
sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one
after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they
have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's
bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows
star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far !

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will
each leave his mate
To fly after the player ; then, what makes the crickets
elate
Till for boldness they fight one another : and then, what
has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and
half mouse !
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and
our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-
song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And
then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—" Bear,
bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets ! Are
balm seeds not here
To console us ? The land has none left such as he on
the bier.

Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother !"—And
then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she
whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the
great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an
arch
Nought can break ; who shall harm them, our friends ?—
Then, the chorus intoned
As the levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here : for here in the darkness Saul
groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and
listened apart ;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered : and
sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a
start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at
heart.
So the head : but the body still moved not, still hung
there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it un-
checked,
As I sang,

IX

“ Oh, our manhood's prime vigour ! No
spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew un-
braced.
Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up
to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the
cool silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,

And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,

And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bul-rushes tell

That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

How good is man's life, the mere living ! how fit to employ

All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy !

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward ?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung

The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue

Joining in while it could to the witness, ' Let one more attest,

I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best !'

Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew

Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true :

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,

Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch ; a people is thine ;

And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine !

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage
 (like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the
 gold go)
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame
 crowning them,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King
Saul ! ”

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp
 and voice,
Each lifting Saul’s name out of sorrow, each bidding
 rejoice
Saul’s fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I
 say,
The Lord’s army, in rapture of service, strains through
 its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—“ Saul ! ” cried I,
 and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
 who hung propped
By the tent’s cross-support in the centre, was struck by
 his name.
Have ye seen when Spring’s arrowy summons goes right
 to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held
 (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
 broad bust of stone
A year’s snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves
 grasp of the sheet ?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to
 his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your
 mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages un-
told—

Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow
and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail,
there they are !
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the
nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green
on his crest
For their food in the ardours of summer. One long
shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was
stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and
aware.
What was gone, what remained ? All to traverse 'twixt
hope and despair.
Death was past, life not come : so he waited. Awhile
his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith
to remand
To their place what new objects should enter : 'twas
Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt
any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from
the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow
decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and
entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely : so, arm
folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next
should I urge

To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song
filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it
yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty : beyond,
on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten
the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup
they put by ?
He saith, " It is good ; " still he drinks not : he lets me
praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round
me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in
sleep ;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that
might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the
hill and the sky :
And I laughed—" Since my days are ordained to be
passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and
the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly
shall know !
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the
courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for."
And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again ; I grew surer ; so, once
more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

“ Yea, my King,”

I began—“ thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man
and by brute :
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its
stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid’s lip, the stag’s antler ; then
safely outburst
The fan-branches all round ; and thou mindedst when
these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect : yet
more was to learn,
E’en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow ? or care
for the plight
Of the palm’s self whose slow growth produced them ?
Not so ! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour thee
such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for ! the spirit
be thine !
By the spirit, when age shall o’ercome thee, thou still
shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of
a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running ! Each
deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world ; until e’en as
the sun

Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
 though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must
 everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of
 thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall
 thrill
Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they
 too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South
 and the North
With radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse
 in the past !
But the license of age has its limit ; thou diest at last :
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her
 height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever
 take flight.
No ! Again a long draught of my soul-wine ! Look
 forth o'er the years !
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual ; begin
 with the seer's !
Is Saul dead ? In the depth of the vale make his tomb
 —bid arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till,
 built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers :
 whose fame would ye know ?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record
 shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul,
 so he did ;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there ! Which
 fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
 they shall spend

(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise,
and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the states-
man's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The
river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
prophet-winds rave :
So the pen gives unborn generations their due and
their part
In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
that thou art ! ”

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst
grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to
essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and
my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word
was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed
hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to
save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's
throne from man's grave !
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my
heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night
I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my
sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep !

For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron
 upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
 Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more
 strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly
 resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand
 replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the
 swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his coun-
 tenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe ; and he girds now his loins
 as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp
 set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion ; and still,
 though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God
 did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never
 quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the
 pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
 there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop,
 to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched
 on the praise

I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient
there ;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I
was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast
knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak
roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace : he spoke
not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with
care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow :
thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my
head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scruti-
nized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but where was
the sign ?
I yearned—" Could I help thee, my father, inventing a
bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future
and this ;
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's
heart to dispense ! "

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song
more ! out-broke—

XVII

" I have gone the whole round of creation : I saw and
I spoke :

I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in
my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned
him again
His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet
all's law.
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each
faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-
drop was asked.
Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom
laid bare.
Have I forethought ? how purblind, how blank, to the
Infinite Care !
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success ?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no
less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is
seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises
it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-
complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity
known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my
own.
There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-
wink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I
think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I
worst

E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if
I durst !

But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love : I abstain for
love's sake.

—What, my soul ? see thus far and no farther ? when
doors great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the
hundredth appal ?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the
greatest of all ?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it ?

Here, the parts shift ?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what
Began ?

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this
man,

And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet
alone can ?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will,
much less power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous
dower

Of the life he was gifted and filled with ? to make such
a soul,

Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering
the whole ?

And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears
attest)

These good things being given, to go on, and give one
more, the best ?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at
the height

This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's
minute of night ?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the
mistake,

Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him
awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find
himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new
harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?
—or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to
make sure;
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified
bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the
struggles in this.

XVIII

“ I believe it ! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who
receive :
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to
believe.
All's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as
prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to
the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy
dread Sabaoth :
I will ?—the mere atoms despise me ! Why am I not
loth
To look that, even that in the face too ? Why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance ? What stops
my despair ?
This ;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but
what man Would do !
See the King—I would help him but cannot, the
wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to
enrich,

To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—know-
ing which,
I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through
me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou
—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor
down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no
breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue
with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be
proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being
Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall
stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my
flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it
shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand
like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See
the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the
night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to
right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the
aware:

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly
there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell
loosed with her crews ;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled
and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I
fainted not,
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported,
suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy
behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to
rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from
earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender
birth ;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills ;
In the shuddering forests' held breath ; in the sudden
wind-thrills ;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye
sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread ; in the birds
stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid
with awe :
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new
law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by
the flowers ;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved
the vine-bowers :
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent
and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—" E'en so, it
is so ! "

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was !
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago ;

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
 Struck them tame ;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
 Bought and sold.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
 Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
 As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
 Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
 Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
 In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
 Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
 Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
 For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,
 dumb
Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
 Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
 All the men !

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
 Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
 Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
 Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
 South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
 As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
 Gold, of course.
Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !
 Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !
 Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest !
 Love is best.

EVELYN HOPE

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
 She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
 Little has yet been changed, I think :
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
 Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died !
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ;
It was not her time to love ; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,

Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told ?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

No, indeed ! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love :
I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few :
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay ?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;

Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me :
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
What is the issue ? let us see !

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while !
My heart seemed full as it could hold—
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep :
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !
There, that is our secret : go to sleep !
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-
square ;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window
there !

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least !
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than
a beast.

III

Well, now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's
turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses !
Why ?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something
to take the eye !
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry ;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who
hurries by ;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the
sun gets high ;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted
properly.

V

What of a villa ? Though winter be over in March by
rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well
off the heights :
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen
steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-
trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you ? You've summer all at
once ;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red
bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick
and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square ? There's a fountain to
spout and splash !

In the shade it sings and springs ; in the shine such
foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in the conch—fifty gazers do not
abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist
in a sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though
you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted
forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn
and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem
a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicada is
shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the
resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the
fever and chill.

IX

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-
bells begin :
No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in :
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets
blood, draws teeth ;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play,
piping hot !
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves
were shot.

Above it, behold the archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new
law of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
So-and-so

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and
Cicero,

" And, moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) " the
skirts of Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
unctuous than ever he preached."

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady
borne smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
stuck in her heart !

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife ;
No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleasure
in life.

X

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls, wine, at
double the rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil
pays passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not
the city !

Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but still—ah, the pity,
the pity !

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with
cowls and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the
yellow candles ;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross
with handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better
prevention of scandals :

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

LET 's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep :
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep !

What so wild as words are ?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough !

See the creature stalking
While we speak !
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek !

What so false as truth is,
False to thee ?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

Be a god and hold me
With a charm !
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm !

Teach me, only teach, Love !
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night :
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight :

—Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me !)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn evenings come ;
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue ?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too !

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose !

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
“ There he is at it, deep in Greek :
Now then, or never, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship ! ”

I shall be at it indeed, my friends !
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees—
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand :
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead !

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge !
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain ?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings !

Does it feed the little lake below ?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow !

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it

By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers !
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needed mat of moss,

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet ;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike !

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont :
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times ;
The place is silent and aware ;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor ?

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they ; age threatens and they condemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem !

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit

Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme ;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

My own, confirm me ! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead ?

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do ; each is sucked
In each now : on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands ?

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine !

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss ?

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall !

What did I say ?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell : 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better ; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square :
Nothing to see ! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,

Read duly the dead builder's date ;
Then cross the bridge we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait !

Oh moment, one and infinite !
The water slips o'er stock and stone ;
The West is tender, hardly bright :
How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, the chrysolite !

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well :
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away !
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this !

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her :
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test !
“ Hold the last fast ! ” runs the rhyme.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend :
But a last leaf—fear to touch !

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
 Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all !
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall !

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
 That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
 And taste a very hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize !

You might have turned and tried a man,
 Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
 His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
 And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
 They are one and one, with a shadowy third ;
One near one is too far.

A moment after, and hands unseen
 Were hanging the night around us fast ;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
 Life and life : we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

The forests had done it ; there they stood ;
 We caught for a moment the powers at play :
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
 Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

: **How the world is made for each of us !**
 How all we perceive and know in it

Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does !

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan ;
Each living his own, to boot.

I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
There took my station and degree ;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet !

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how !

So, the earth has gained by one man more,
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too ;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes : which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou—
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone ?
When cry for the old comfort and find none ?
Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy face.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so ! Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole ;
Vainly the flesh fades ; soul makes all things new.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by !
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky !

And is it not the bitterer to think
That disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed ?
I know that nature ! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell ;
If old things remain old things all is well,

For thou art grateful as becomes man best :
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

I seem to see ! We meet and part ; 'tis brief ;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ;
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call :
And for all this, one little hour to thank !

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
“ Therefore she is immortally my bride ;
Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

“ So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone ?
—Where was it till the sunset ? where anon
It will be at the sunrise ! What's to blame ? ”

Is it so helpful to thee ? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam ?
Is the remainder of the way so long
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong ?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream !

—Ah, but the fresher faces ! “ Is it true,”
Thou'lt ask, “ some eyes are beautiful and new ?
Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such
wealth ?

And if a man would press his lips to lips
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth ?

" It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
More than if such a picture I prefer
 Passing a day with, to a room's bare side :
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
 A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide ?

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
 Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
 Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see !

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
 (Say it and think it) obdurate no more,
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
 Image and superscription once they bore !

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
 Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee !

Only, why should it be with stain at all ?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, " Such the look and such
 The smile he used to love with, then as now ! "

Might I die last and show thee ! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,

If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it

The better that they are so blank, I know !

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more

By heart each word, too much to learn at first ;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low door-way's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst !

And yet thou art the nobler of us two :

What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,

Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride ?

I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—

Is it to bear ?—if easy, I'll not ask :

Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

Pride ?—when those eyes forestall the life behind

The death I have to go through !—when I find,

Now that I want thy help most, all of thee !

What did I fear ? Thy love shall hold me fast

Until the little minute's sleep is past

And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be !

MY STAR

ALL that I know

Of a certain star

Is, it can throw

(Like the angled spar)

Now a dart of red,

Now a ~~dart~~ of blue ;

Till my friends have said

They would fain see, too,

My star that dartles the red and the blue !

Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower, hangs furled :

They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.

What matter to me if their star is a world ?

Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I love it.

A PRETTY WOMAN

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,

And the blue eye

Dear and dewy,

And that infantine fresh air of hers !

To think men cannot take you, sweet,

And enfold you,

Ay, and hold you,

And so keep you what they make you, sweet !

You like us for a glance, you know—

For a word's sake

Or a sword's sake,

All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—

You and youth too,

Eyes and mouth too,

All the face composed of flowers, we say.

All's our own, to make the most of, sweet—

Sing and say for,

Watch and pray for,

Keep a secret or go boast of, sweet !

But for loving, why, you would not, sweet,
 Though we prayed you,
 Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, sweet !

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there :
 Be its beauty
 Its sole duty !
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there !

And while the face lies quiet there,
 Who shall wonder
 That I ponder
A conclusion ? I will try it there.

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,
 Scout mere liking ?
 Thunder striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone !

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
 Love with liking ?
 Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee ?

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
 If love grew there
 'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet ?

Is the creature too imperfect, say ?
 Would you mend it
 And so end it ?
Since not all addition perfects aye !

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
 Just perfection—
 Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps ?

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
 Into tinder,
 And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once ?

Or else kiss away one's soul on her ?
 Your love fancies !
 —A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her !

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
 Plucks a mould-flower
 For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose :

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
 Precious metals
 Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose !

Then how grace a rose ? I know a way !
 Leave it, rather.
 Must you gather ?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away !

LOVE IN A LIFE

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself !—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume !

As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew :
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door ;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance ! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares ?
But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune !

LIFE IN A LOVE

ESCAPE me ?
Never—
Beloved !
While I am I, and you are you,
 So long as the world contains us both,
 Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one cludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear :
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed !
 Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail of my purpose here ?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again,—
 So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound
 At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
 Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed !

MEMORABILIA

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again ?
How strange it seems and new !

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after ;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter !

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
Mid the blank miles round about :

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather !
Well, I forget the rest.

BEFORE

I

LET them fight it out, friend ! things have gone too far.
God must judge the couple : leave them as they are
—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story !

II

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment ?

III

Who's the culprit of them ? How must he conceive
God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
“ 'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her :
Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either ! ”

IV

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes ;
Then go live his life out ! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes !
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide ?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance ?

VII

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man ?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can !
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven !

VIII

All or nothing, stake it ! Trusts he God or no ?
Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be it so !
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses !

IX

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then! Both the fighters to their places!
While I count three, step you back as many paces!

AFTER

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold:
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:
Cover the face!

“ DE GUSTIBUS—”

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they !
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the beanflowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June !

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break ?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles

Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling :
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy !
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her, Calais)
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, " Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she ;
So it always was, so shall ever be !

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

A PICTURE AT FANO

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
 Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come, for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
 With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread ?

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it ! All is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared ?

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend !)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too : and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

POPULARITY

STAND still, true poet that you are !
I know you ; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us : when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star !

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend
That loving hand of his which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend ?

His clenched hand shall uncloset at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty :
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising ;
“ Others give best at first, but thou
Forever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now ! ”

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder :
I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells ?

And each bystander of them all
Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
—To get which, pricked a king's ambition ;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered !
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lip heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze

And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last !
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats :
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup :
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up ?
What porridge had John Keats ?

ONE WAY OF LOVE

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside ? Alas !
Let them lie. Suppose they die ?
The chance was they might take her eye.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute !
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music ? So !
Break the string ; fold music's wing :
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing !

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell ?
She will not give me heaven ? 'Tis well !
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they !

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

JUNE was not over
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—
“ If I tire of your June, will she greatly care ? ”

Well, dear, in-doors with you !
True ! serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom ?
Can it clear scores with you ?
Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper !
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly !
If June mend her bower now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking the roses,—my June will do rightly.

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness :
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June will consider.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her ? I said
" Frà Pandolf " by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there ; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say " Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or " Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat : " such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say ?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one ! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good ! but
thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused " My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

" Well," cried he, " Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon !
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him ! " The chief's eye flashed ; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes :
" You're wounded ! " " Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
" I'm killed, Sire ! " And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

IN A GONDOLA

He sings

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part ;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

She speaks

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way :
" This woman's heart and soul and brain
Are mine as much as this gold chain
She bids me wear ; which " (say again)
" I choose to make by cherishing
A precious thing, or choose to fling
Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more !
Since words are only words. Give o'er !

Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet name,
Which if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtailed in dusk and splendid folds !

What's left but—all of me to take ?
I am the Three's : prevent them, slake
Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage
In practising with gems can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

He sings

Past we glide, and past, and past !
What's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast ?
Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride :
Past we glide !

Past we glide, and past, and past !
Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast ?
Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried :
Past we glide !

She sings

The moth's kiss, first !
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up ; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

The bee's kiss, now !
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,

A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings

What are we two ?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe ;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever ! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou !

Say again, what we are ?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever ! And now.
As of old, I am I, thou art thou !

He muses

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?
The land's lap or the water's breast ?
• To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must ;
Which life were best on Summer eves ?

He speaks, musing

Lie back ; could thought of mine improve you ?
From this shoulder let there spring

A wing ; from this, another wing ;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you !
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world !

Rescue me thou, the only real !
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart !
Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art !

Still he muses

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader ? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back ; I reel ;
And . . . is it thou I feel ?

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink !

She replies, musing

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do : thus : were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way ? Death's to fear from flame or steel,
Or poison doubtless ; but from water—feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ? There !
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away : since you have praised my hair,
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks

Row home ? must we row home ? Too surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled ;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child :
But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face ?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead !
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.

Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again !

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine ! What should your chamber do ?
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look : your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell !
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend !
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke !
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken

Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered ! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back
That overfloods my room with sweets,
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze ! If the ribbon's black,
The Three are watching : keep away !

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair !
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper ; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me ?
Resume your past self of a month ago !
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, " All thanks, Siora ! "—

Heart to heart
And lips to lips ! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art !

He is surprised, and stabbed

It was ordained to be so, sweet !—and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
Still kiss me ! Care not for the cowards ! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt ! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived : but I
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—can die !

WARING

I

WHAT'S become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town ?

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward ?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day ?
Never looked he half so gay !

He was prouder than the devil :
How he must have cursed our revel !
Ay and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled ? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken ?
" True, but there were sundry jottings,
Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,
Certain first steps were achieved
Already which "—(is that your meaning ?)
" Had well borne out whoe'er believed
In more to come ! " But who goes gleaning
Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand corn-fields by him ? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us !)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.

E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavour
And goodness unrepaid as ever ;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to ?
Telling aught but honest truth to ?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness !
No ! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter !
Well, 'tis done with ; she's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally ;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach ; and in the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more !
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine ! I'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content ?
I'd say, " to only have conceived,
Planned your great works, apart from progress,
Surpasses little works achieved ! "
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child !
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled

To capture ; and completely gives
Its pettish humours license, barely
Requiring that it lives.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed !
Travels Waring East away ?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstart
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame ?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash ?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures borne perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she always
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach,
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry

Amid their barbarous twitter !
In Russia ? Never ! Spain were fitter !
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
That we and Waring meet again
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when their's slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint ;
Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint :
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
“ Give me my so-long promised son,
Let Waring end what I begun ! ”
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face ; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
Or hops are picking : or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath ;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,

Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men :
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so—
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh Waring, what's to really be ?
A clear stage and a crowd to see !
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck ?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius—am I right ?—shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife !
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life !
Some one shall somehow run amuck
With this old world for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring ! Who's alive ?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names !—but 'tis, somehow,
As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest !
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best !

II

“ When I last saw Waring . . . ”
(How all turned to him who spoke !
You saw Waring ? Truth or joke ?
In land-travel or sea-faring ?)

“ We were sailing by Triest
Where a day or two we harboured :
A sunset was in the West,
When, looking over the vessel’s side,
One of our company espied
A sudden speck to larboard.
And as a sea-duck flies and swims
At once, so came the light craft up,
With its sole lateen sail that trims
And turns (the water round its rims
Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
And by us like a fish it curled,
And drew itself up close beside,
Its great sail on the instant furled,
And o’er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar’s)
‘ Buy wine of us, you English Brig ?
Or fruit, tobacco and cigars ?
A pilot for you to Triest ?
Without one, look you ne’er so big,
They’ll never let you up the bay !
We natives should know best.’
I turned, and ‘ just those fellows’ way,’
Our captain said, ‘ The ’long-shore thieves
Are laughing at us in their sleeves.’

“ In truth, the boy leaned laughing back ;
And one, half-hidden by his side
Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
With great grass hat and kerchief black,

Who looked up with his kingly throat,
Said somewhat, while the other shook
His hair back from his eyes to look
Their longest at us ; then the boat,
I know not how, turned sharply round,
Laying her whole side on the sea
As a leaping fish does ; from the lee
Into the weather, cut somehow
Her sparkling path beneath our bow,
And so went off, as with a bound,
Into the rosy and golden half
Of the sky, to overtake the sun
And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
Its singing cave ; yet I caught one
Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
And neither time nor toil could mar
Those features : so I saw the last
Of Waring ! "—You ? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar !
Look East, where whole new thousands are !
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

PIANO DI SORRENTO

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet !
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.
Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads ;

All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
—The flowers or the weeds.
Time for rain ! for your long hot dry Autumn
Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of,
Whose heads,—specked with white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night,—
Your mother bites off for her supper.
Red-ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
In halves on the tree :
And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,
Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
Wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover :
Nor use seemed in trying

To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.
No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit ;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps ;
Himself too as bare to the middle
—You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
Grape-harvest began.
In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
Like blood the juice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
Since still when he seems all but master,
In pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's driving ;
Your girls that are older,—
For under the hedges of aloe,
And where, on its bed

Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
Lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and filling
Their laps with the snails
Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
Your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
When, supping in state,
We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,
Three over one plate)
With lasagne so tempting to swallow
In slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That colour of popes.
Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you :
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence :
Nay, taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
That peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter ;
Next, sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine ;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.
Scirocco is loose !
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Tho' not yet half black !
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,

For here comes the whole of the tempest !
No refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.
O how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
The mules and the cows ?
Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;
Your brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
That offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—
Or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
Those hairy gold orbs !
But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
Just stopping to neigh
When he recognized down in the valley
His mates on their way
With the faggots and barrels of water ;
And soon we emerged
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow ;
And still as we urged
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
As up still we trudged
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
And place was e'en grudged
'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
Like the loose broken teeth
Of some monster which climbed there to die
From the ocean beneath—
Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed
That clung to the path,
And dark rosemary ever a-dying
That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
And lentisks as staunch

To the stone where they root and bear berries,
And . . . what shows a branch
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets
Of pale seagreen leaves ;
Over all trod my mule with the caution
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
Still, foot after foot like a lady :
So, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano,
And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal !
No rampart excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived
In the blue solitudes.
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement !
Still moving with you ;
For, ever some new head and breast of them
Thrusts into view
To observe the intruder ; you see it
If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you, surprise them :
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean over
And love (they pretend)
—Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,
The wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut :
All is silent and grave :
'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,
How fair ! but a slave.
So, I turned to the sea ; and there slumbered
As greenly as ever
Those isles of the siren, your Galli ;
No ages can sever

The Three, nor enable their sister
To join them,—halfway
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
No farther to-day,
Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,
Watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock, her bold sister
Swum halfway already.
Fortù, shall we sail there together
And see from the sides
Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts
Where the siren abides ?
Shall we sail round and round them, close over
The rocks, tho' unseen,
That ruffle the grey glassy water
To glorious green ?
Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
Reach land and explore,
On the largest, the strange square black turret
With never a door,
Just a loop to admit the quick lizards ;
Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear ?
—The secret they sang to Ulysses
When, ages ago,
He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know.

Ah, see ! The sun breaks o'er Calvano ;
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
In airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
Our tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering, under the wall there ;

One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof,
While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall
—An abbot's own cheek.
All is over. Wake up and come out now,
And down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order
At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening ;
To-morrow's the Feast
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
Of Virgins the least,
As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three weeks,
Was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
With red and blue papers ;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
A-blaze with long tapers ;
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
Who, when the priest's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that's brisk
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp
Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
The priests mean to stomp.
All round the glad church lie old bottles
With gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters,

Religiously popped ;
And at night from the crest of Calvano
Great bonfires will hang,
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
And more poppers bang.
At all events, come—to the garden,
As far as the wall ;
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers !

—“ Such trifles ! ” you say ?
Fortù, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise
—If ’twere proper, Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skies !

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

YOU'RE my friend :
I was the man the Duke spoke to ;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;
So, here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend !

Ours is a great wild country :
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop ;
For when you've passed the corn-field country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base

Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country.

I was born the day this present Duke was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was happy and young, not old !)
I in the kennel, he in the bower :
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day ;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?
And that's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call ;
That's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed

The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
"And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side : "
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume :
—They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage !
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game !
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)
Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin !
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And rosy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who :
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ;
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways ?
—Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without know-
ing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it ;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-
out :
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;
—They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire !

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive :
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees :
In truth, she was not hard to please !
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :
As for us, styled the " serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand ?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it ;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke :
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward :

And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey ;
For such things must begin some one day.

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, " You labour in vain !
This is all a jest against God, who meant
I should ever be, as I am, content
And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire—
To a stone she might have given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day)
—For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one !
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticize,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,

And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike him !
So found the Duke, and his mother like him :
The lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin ;
And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, " 'Tis done to spite me,
But I shall find in my power to right me ! "
Don't swear, friend ! The old one, many a year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled :
Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it !
What meant old poets by their strictures ?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures ?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,

And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions :
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated—
To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk " ohs "
And " ahs " while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-
hose ;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on't !

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, " The Duke's part provided,
Had not the Duchess some share in the business ? "
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function ;
Since ancient authors gave his tenet,
" When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
In a clean ewer with a fair towelling,
Let her preside at the disembowelling."
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,

And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing ?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting ?
With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating ?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant ;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance ?

And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was decorous and lawful ;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once !
What meant she ?—Who was she ?—Her duty and
station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on !
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase—oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column !

However, at sunrise our company mustered ;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,

The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under ;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march ?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards ;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle ;
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters !
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,

Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters :
Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.
And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gipsy then above ground ;
And, sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they use to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding :
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming
—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
A word in reply ; and in vain she felt

With twitching fingers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning ;
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow ;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent wellnigh double ?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew near
He told the crone—as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery—
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude ;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gipsy mother

And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising :
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement :
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken :
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison !
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber ?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door ;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent :
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees,
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil

—Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or bell clappers.
I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on ?
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression :
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
—Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
—Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving,
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened :
When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furred
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said :—

“ And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,

And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey through,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain :
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark ;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that round young cheek of thine
I make them recognize the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
For so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest—
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure ;
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part

And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore ;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve !
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy ;
Not a power of life but we employ
To satisfy thy nature's want ;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done ;
Though each apart were never so weak,
Ye vainly through the world should seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right :
So, to approach at least that end,
And blend,—as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee,—
As climbing plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere ?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,

And take a stronger nature's sway ?
I foresee and could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well :
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
Let them say what thou shalt do !
Only be sure thy daily life,
In its peace or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved ;
We pursue thy whole career,
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
We are beside thee in all thy ways,
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, angry—but indifferent, no !
Whether it be thy lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street ;
Or thou step alone through the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all is mute.
So, at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage ;
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind ?
Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,

Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then—"

Ay, then indeed something would happen !
But what ? For here her voice changed like a bird's ;
There grew more of the music and less of the words ;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks !
But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished !
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep ; and but one spring made I
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,—
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess : I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,

But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding ;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what its friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her ; the crone
Followed silent and alone ;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding ;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry ;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it.
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,

By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself !
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her.

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin ?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness

—But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady away !
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head's one that its spite was spent on :
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder :
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So, they made no search and small inquiry—
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it !
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse :
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

You're my friend—

What a thing friendship is, world without end !

How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up

As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,

And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly, sunlit,

Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,

Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—

Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids ;

Each supplies a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,

Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand
doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees

Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.

I have seen my little lady once more,

Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,

For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;

I always wanted to make a clean breast of it :

And now it is made—why, my heart's blood, that went
trickle,

Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,

Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,

And genially floats me about the giblets.

I'll tell you what I intend to do :

I must see this fellow his sad life through—

He is our Duke, after all,

And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.

My father was born here, and I inherit

His fame, a chain he bound his son with ;

Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,

But there's no mine to blow up and get done with :

So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.

For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,

Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,

Some day or other, his head in a morion

And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,

Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.

And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,

And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,

Then I shall scrape together my earnings ;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses :
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in ;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue :
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you ?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinfull,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly !
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age ? He must hurry more, that's all ;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold :
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul ?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
“ You never knew then, how it all ended,
What fortune good or bad attended
The little lady your Queen befriended ? ”
—And when that's told me, what's remaining ?
This world's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorner !

Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau :
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
—So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good night ;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen !

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
“ Praise God ! ” sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, “ Praise God ! ”

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, “ Well done ;
I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

“ As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

“ This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter's dome.”

Said Theocrite, " Would God that I
Might praise him, that great way, and die ! "

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, " Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever liyed on earth content.

(He did God's will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, " A praise is in mine ear ;
There is no doubt in it, no fear :

" So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways :
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day : he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
And set thee here ; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped-
Creation's chorus stopped !

“ Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain.

“ With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up creation’s pausing strain.

“ Back to the cell and poor employ :
Resume the craftsman and the boy ! ”

Theocrite grew old at home ;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter’s dome.

One vanished as the other died :
They sought God side by side.

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*)

“ HEIGHO,” yawned one day King Francis,
“ Distance all value enhances !
When a man’s busy, why, leisure
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure :
‘Faith, and at leisure once is he ?
Straightway he wants to be busy.
Here we’ve got peace ; and aghast I’m
Caught thinking war the true pastime.
Is there a reason in metre ?
Give us your speech, master Peter ! ”
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne’er am at loss with my Naso,
“ Sire,” I replied, “ joys prove cloudlets :
Men are the merest Ixions ”—
Here the King whistled aloud, “ Let’s
. . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions ! ”
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading.
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold ;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most—
Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside ;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled : one's heart's beating redoubled ;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter ;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
Such a brute ! Were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded

The barrier, they reached and they rested
On the space that might stand him in best stead :
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered ?
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead !
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress :
So guarded he entrance or egress.
" How he stands ! " quoth the King : " we may well swear,
(No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere
And so can afford the confession,)
We exercise wholesome discretion
In keeping aloof from his threshold ;
Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
Their first would too pleasantly purloin
The visitor's brisket or sirloin :
But who's he would prove so fool-hardy ?
Not the best man of Marignan, pardie ! "

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested :
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past ; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier !
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,

Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

“ Your heart's queen, you dethrone her ?
So should I ! ”—cried the King—“ 'twas mere vanity,
Not love, set that task to humanity ! ”
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,—
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what “ speeches like gold ” were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper :
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter ;
Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant ?
If she wished not the rash deed's recalment ?
“ For I ”—so I spoke—“ am a poet :
Human nature,—behoves that I know it ! ”

She told me, “ Too long had I heard
Of the deed proved alone by the word :
For my love—what De Lorge would not dare !
With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare !

And the endless descriptions of death
He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
Must offer my love in return.

When I looked on your lion, it brought
All the dangers at once to my thought,
Encountered by all sorts of men,
Before he was lodged in his den,—
From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
With no King and no Court to applaud,
By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
Yet to capture the creature made shift,
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
Of the pit, on no greater pretence
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
So, wiser I judged it to make
One trial what 'death for my sake'
Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
Than to wait until time should define
Such a phrase not so simply as I,
Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
The blow a glove gives is but weak :
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek ?
But when the heart suffers a blow,
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know ? "

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian ;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour

The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
If you whispered " Friend, what you'd get, first earn ! "
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy ;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her ?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in.
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled—" His nerves are grown firmer :
Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."
Venienti occurrere morbo !
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

OF the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force ?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate :
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

“ Were the object less mean, would he stand
At the swing of my hand !
For obscurity helps him and blots
The hole where he squats.”
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain ! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue ;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth :
Still he kept to his filth.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press—
Just a son or a mother to seize !
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
’Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself !
No : I could not but smile through my chafe :
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
’Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
(2,376)

To put out of its pain.
And, "no!" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
The gravamen's in that!
How the lion, who crouches to suit
His back to my foot,
Would admire that I stand in debate!
But the small turns the great
If it vexes you,—that is the thing!
Toad or rat vex the king?
Though I waste half my realm to unearth
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my under-ground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend?"
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed
—So, I was afraid!

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER
CAME ”

(See Edgar's song in *Lear*)

I

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff ?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road ? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed : neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend ;")

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves :
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit ?

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view

O'er the safe road, 'twas gone ; grey plain all round :
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.

I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

X

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing throve :
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove !
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think ; a burr had been a treasure-trove.

XI

No ! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. “ See
Or shut your eyes,” said Nature peevishly,
“ It nothing skills : I cannot help my case :
'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.”

XII

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped ; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness ? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy ; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there :
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud !

XIV

Alive ? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane ;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe ;
I never saw a brute I hated so ;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art :
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace !
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh ! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment ? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst !

XVIII

Better this present than a past like that ;
Back therefore to my darkening path again !
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.

Will the night send a howlet or a bat ?
I asked : when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms ;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX

So petty yet so spiteful ! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it ;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng :
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard !
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh ! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage !
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash ? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or ~~wild-cats~~ in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose ?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there !
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk ? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes !) within a rood—
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils ;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end !
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further ! At the thought,

A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you !
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den !

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place ! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight ;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Duncce,
Dotard, a-doing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight !

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart.
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.
(2, 376)

XXXII

Not see ? because of night perhaps ?—why, day
Came back again for that ! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft :
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
“ Now stab and end the creature—to the heft ! ”

XXXIII

Not hear ? when noise was everywhere ! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost ! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture ! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew “ *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.* ”

A LIGHT WOMAN

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three ?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me ?

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth for a whim !

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at a wren instead !

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled ?
Patience, a moment's space !

For see, my friend goes shaking and white ;
He eyes me as the basilisk :
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief :
“ Though I love her—that, he comprehends—
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
And be loyal to one's friends ! ”

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall ;
Just a touch to try and off it came ;
'Tis mine,—can I let it fall ?

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst !
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist ?
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see ;
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess :
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me ?
No hero, I confess.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own :
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone !

One likes to show the truth for the truth ;
That the woman was light is very true :
But suppose she says,—Never mind that youth !
What wrong have I done to you ?

Well, anyhow, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand ;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here's a subject made to your hand !

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, " Who rides by with the royal air ? "

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased ;
She leaned forth, one on either hand ;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, " The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word ?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride—
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise !

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

“ ’Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy’s trim,
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow ”—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
“ My father tarries to bless my state :
I must keep it one day more for him.

“ Is one day more so long to wait ?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know ;
We shall see each other, sure as fate.”

She turned on her side and slept. Just so !
So we resolve on a thing and sleep :
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, “ Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep.”

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke’s alcove)

And smiled “ ’Twas a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—
A shame to efface, whate’er befall !

“ What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night’s fault with this morning’s flowers ? ”

The bridegroom, not a-thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, “ Too much favour for me so mean !

“ But, alas ! my lady leaves the South ;
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth :

“ Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
To avert the flower of life’s decline.”

Quoth the Duke, “ A sage and a kindly fear.
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring :
Be our feast to-night as usual here ! ”

And then to himself—“ Which night shall bring
Thy bride to her lover’s embraces, fool—
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king !

“ Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

“ I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady’s countenance :

“ For I ride—what should I do but ride ?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window—well betide ! ”

So said, so done ; nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow’s sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love’s brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth :
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose :
The world and its ways have a certain worth :

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy ; better wait :
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate !

And she—she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook :

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years ; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream ;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above :
But who can take a dream for a truth ?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove !

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
“ Summon here,” she suddenly said,
Before the rest of my old self pass,

“ Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who fashions the clay no love will change,
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“ Let Robbia’s craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.

“ Make me a face on the window there,
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square !

“ And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle,

“ To say, ‘ What matters it at the end ?
I did no more while my heart was warm
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’

“ Where is the use of the lip’s red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm—

“ Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine ?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow.”

But long ere Robbia’s cornice, fine
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady’s face—

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes!
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?"

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
Set me on horseback here aloft,
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze—
Admire and say, 'When he was alive
How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
At idleness which aspires to strive."

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.

I hear you reproach, " But delay was best,
For their end was a crime."—Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view !

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf ?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham :
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play !—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin :
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you ? *De te, fabula !*

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
 Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness !
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers ;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
 With life or death in the balance : right !
The blood replenished me again ;
My last thought was at least not vain :
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
 Who knows but the world may end to-night ?

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
 And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here !—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear !
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry ?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me ? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell !
Where had I been now if the worst befell ?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?
We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past !
I hoped she would love me ; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired ?
What heart alike conceived and dared ?
What act proved all its thought had been ?
What will but felt the fleshly screen ?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing ! what atones ?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet ? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell

What we felt only ; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much : but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men ?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme ?
Sing, riding's a joy ! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor,—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn !
You acquiesce, and shall I repine ?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
“ Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end ! ”
I gave my youth ; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us ? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such ? Try and test !
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best ?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long !
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,

We, fixed so, ever should so abide ?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride ?

THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, " Good folk, mere noise repels—
But give me your sun from yonder skies ! "
They had answered, " And afterward, what else ?

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep !
Nought man could do, have I left undone :
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—
Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow,

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind ;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
“ Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me ? ”—God might question ; now instead,
’Tis God shall repay : I am safer so.

THE TWINS

“ Give ” and “ It-shall-be-given-unto-you ”

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the uncouth :
Do roses stick like burrs ?

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther ; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, “ We’re poor !

“ Poor, who had plenty once,
When gifts fell thick as rain :
But they give us nought, for the nonce,
And how should we give again ? ”

Then the beggar, “ See your sins !
Of old, unless I err,
Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
Date and Dabitur.

“ While Date was in good case
 Dabitur flourished too :
 For Dabitur’s lenten face
 No wonder if Date rue.

“ Would ye retrieve the one ?
 Try and make plump the other !
 When Date’s penance is done,
 Dabitur helps his brother.

“ Only, beware relapse ! ”
 The Abbot hung his head.
 This beggar might be perhaps
 An angel, Luther said.

A GRAMMARIAN’S FUNERAL

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN
 EUROPE

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow :
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row !
 That’s the appropriate country ; there, man’s thought,
 Rarer, intenser,
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer.
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
 Crowded with culture !

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;
 Clouds overcome it ;
No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit.
Thither our path lies ; wind we up the heights :
 Wait ye the warning ?
Our low life was the level's and the night's ;
 He's for the morning.
Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
 'Ware the beholders !
This is our master, famous calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft
 Safe from the weather !
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo !
Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note
 Winter would follow ?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !
 Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, " New measures, other feet anon !
 My dance is finished ? "
No, that's the world's way : (keep the mountain-side,
 Make for the city !)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity ;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping :
" What's in the scroll," quoth he, " thou keepest furled ?
 Show me their shaping,
Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
 Give ! "—So, he gown'd him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page :
 Learned, we found him.

Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain :
“ Time to taste life,” another would have said,
 “ Up with the curtain ! ”
This man said rather, “ Actual life comes next ?
 Patience a moment !
Grant I have mastered learning’s crabbed text,
 Still there’s the comment.
Let me know all ! Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy !
Even to the crumbs I’d fain cat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy.”
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
 When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give !
 Sooner, he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here’s the town-gate reached : there’s the market-place
 Gaping before us.)
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus !)
That before living he’d learn how to live—
 No end to learning :
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say, “ But time escapes :
 Live now or never ! ”
He said, “ What’s time ? Leave Now for dogs and apes !
 Man has Forever.”
Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head :
 Calculus racked him :
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead :
 Tussis attacked him.

" Now, master, take a little rest ! "—not he !
 (Caution redoubled,
Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly !)
 Not a whit troubled,
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
 Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
 Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
 Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
 Bad is our bargain !
Was it not great ? did not he throw on God,
 (He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
 Perfect the earthen ?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
 Just what it all meant ?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
 Paid by instalment.
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
 Found, or earth's failure :
" Wilt thou trust death or not ? " He answered " Yes !
 Hence with life's pale lure ! "
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
 Sees it and does it :
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
 Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
 His hundred's soon hit :
This high man, aiming at a million,
 Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next
 Let the world mind him !
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
 Seeking shall find him.
So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
 Ground he at grammar ;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife :
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be !—
Properly based *Oun*—
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place :
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews !
Here's the top-peak ; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there :
This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there ?
Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds
form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go ! Let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send !
Lofty designs must close in like effects :
Loftily lying,
Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying. .

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world ; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
At his approach ; and, in the lost endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace

Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own account :
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook !

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed ?
Go !—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See ! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture ; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed ; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad :
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East ! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear !

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION

THERE's heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof ;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me ; splendour-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof :

For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.
I lie where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled ;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child ;
Ordnained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest ; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
And having thus created me,
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
Guiltless for ever, like a tree
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
The law by which it prospers so :
But sure that thought and word and deed
All go to swell his love for me,
Me, made because that love had need
Of something irrevocably
Pledged solely its content to be.
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop !
I have God's warrant, could I blend
All hideous sins, as in a cup,
To drink the mingled venoms up ;
Secure my nature will convert
The draught to blossoming gladness fast :
While sweet dew's turn to the gourd's hurt,
And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,
As from the first its lot was cast.
For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed
By unexhausted power to bless,
I gaze below on hell's fierce bed, .

And those its waves of flame oppress,
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness ;
Whose life on earth aspired to be
One altar-smoke, so pure !—to win
If not love like God's love for me,
At least to keep his anger in ;
And all their striving turned to sin.
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
The martyr, the wan acolyte,
The incense-swinging child,—undone
Before God fashioned star or sun !
God, whom I praise ; how could I praise,
If such as I might understand,
Make out and reckon on his ways,
And bargain for his love, and stand,
Paying a price, at his right hand ?

PICTOR IGNOTUS

FLORENCE, 15—

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up ! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes !
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God : nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant ; or around
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The licence and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
(2,376)

Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion cleared proclaimed without a tongue ;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place ;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup ?
What did ye give me that I have not saved ?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well !)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or North,
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet !—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear !
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels through a door
Of some strange house of idols at its rites !
This world seemed not the world it was before :
Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped
. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun
To press on me and judge me ? Though I stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough !
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live

And see their faces, listen to their prate,
 Partakers of their daily pettiness,
 Discussed of,—“ This I love, or this I hate,
 This likes me more, and this affects me less ! ”
 Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
 My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
 These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
 With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,
 With the same cold calm beautiful regard,—
 At least no merchant traffics in my heart ;
 The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
 Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart :
 Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
 While blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
 They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
 'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
 So, die my pictures ! surely, gently die !
 O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth ?
 Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry ?
 Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth ?

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !
 You need not clap your torches to my face.
 Zooks, what's to blame ? you think you see a monk
 What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
 And here you catch me at an alley's end
 Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar ?
 The Carmine's my cloister : hunt it up,
 Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
 Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
 And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company !
 Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you'll take
 Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,

And please to know me likewise. Who am I ?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call ?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
In the house that caps the corner. Boh ! you were best !
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe !
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you :
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net ?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is !
Just such a face ! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads ! more beside !)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand (" Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped !
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like ? or you should see !
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you ? like enough !
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf ! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,

A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—

Flower o' the broom,

Take away love, and our earth is a tomb !

Flower o' the quince,

I let Lisa go, and what good in life since ?

Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.

Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter

Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim shapes,

And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,

That's all I'm made of ! Into shreds it went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,

All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,

There was a ladder ! Down I let myself,

Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,

And after them. I came up with the fun

Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—

Flower o' the rose,

If I've been merry, what matter who knows ?

And so as I was stealing back again

To get to bed and have a bit of sleep

Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work

On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast

With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,

You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see !

Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—

Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that !

If Master Cosimo announced himself,

Mum's the word naturally ; but a monk !

Come, what am I a beast for ? tell us, now !

I was a baby when my mother died

And father died and left me in the street.

I starved there, God knows how, a year or two

On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,

Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,

My stomach being empty as your hat,

The wind doubled me up and down I went.

Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,

(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month :
“ So, boy, you’re minded,” quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, ’twas refection-time,—
“ To quit this very miserable world ?
Will you renounce ” . . . “ the mouthful of bread ? ’
thought I ;

By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of me ;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
’Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside !
“ Let’s see what the urchin’s fit for ”—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do ! They tried me with their books :
Lord, they’d have taught me Latin in pure waste !
Flower o’ the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, “ amo ” I love !
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together as my fortune was,
Watching folk’s faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I ?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less

For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphony's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A.s and B.s,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked
black.

"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say ?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be !"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you ! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean : then, folks at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling) prayed, and so was gone.

I painted all, then cried " 'Tis ask and have ;
Choose, for more's ready ! "—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—“ That's the very man !
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog !
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma : it's the life ! ”
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funk'd ;
Their betters took their turn to see and say :
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. “ How ? what's here ?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all !
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea ! it's devil's game !
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul !
Give us no more of body than shows soul !
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
That sets us praising,—why not stop with him ?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colours, and what not ?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms !
Rub all out, try at it a second time.
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off !
Have it all out ! ” Now, is this sense, I ask ?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further

And can't fare worse ! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order ? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy ? won't beauty go with these ?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold ?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents :
That's somewhat : and you'll find the soul you have
missed,

Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
“ Rub all out ! ” Well, well, there's my life, in short
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds :
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see in the Corner-house !
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse !
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—“ It's art's decline, my son !
You're not of the true painters, great and old ;
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find ;
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer :
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third ! ”

Flower o' the pine,

You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine !

I'm not the third, then : bless us, they must know !
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin ? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't ;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*

Death for us all, and his own life for each !)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage ! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have ? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they ? all I want's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself :
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught ;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife : and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me : I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here

Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop :
His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge !
You speak no Latin more than I, belike ;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, light and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !
—For what ? Do you feel thankful, ay or no.
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to ? What's it all about ?
To be passed over, despised ? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at ? oh, this last of course !—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it ?
God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, " His works
Are here already ; nature is complete :
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage ! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that ;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face ? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though ! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth !
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you ! Oh, oh,

It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves ! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank ; it means intensely, and means good ;
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
" Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer ! "
Strikes in the Prior : " when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folks—remember matins,
Or, mind you fast next Friday ! " Why, for this
What need of art at all ? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style :
" How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down ? "
I ask a brother : " Hugely," he returns—
" Already not one phiz of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage :
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose ! " Hang the fools !

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine !
Oh, the church knows ! don't misreport me, now !
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself :
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me : I shall paint a piece
. . . There's for you ! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's ! Bless the nuns !
They want a cast of my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,

Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
 Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
 As puff on puff of grated orris-root
 When ladies crowd to church at midsummer.
 And then in the front, of course a saint or two—
 Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
 Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
 The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
 And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
 The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
 Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these
 Secured at their devotion, up shall come
 Out of a corner when you least expect,
 As one by a dark stair into a great light,
 Music and talking, who but Lippo ! I !—
 Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I'm the man !
 Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear ?
 I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
 My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
 I, in this presence, this pure company !
 Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape ?
 Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
 Forward, puts out a soft palm—" Not so fast ! "
 —Addresses the celestial presence, " nay—
 He made you and devised you, after all,
 Though he's none of you ! Could Saint John there,
 draw—
 His camel-hair make up a painting-brush ?
 We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus ! " So, all smile—
 I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
 Under the cover of a hundred wings
 Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
 Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
 The hothead husband ! Thus I scuttle off
 To some safe bench behind, not letting go
 The palm of her, the little lily thing

That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence !
Your hand, sir, and good bye : no lights, no lights !
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me ! There's the grey beginning. Zooks !

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

No more wine ? then we'll push back chairs and talk.
A final glass for me, though : cool, i' faith !
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
It's different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart !
I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes,
Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere ;
It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln : eh ?
These hot long ceremonies of our church
Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,
You take me—amply pay it ! Now, we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir !
Beside 'tis our engagement : don't you know,
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
We'd see truth dawn together ?—truth that peeps
Over the glass's edge when dinner's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time :
'Tis break of day ! You do despise me then.
And if I say, "despise me,"—never fear !
I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair, for example : here,
I well imagine you respect my place

(*Status, entourage, worldly circumstance*)
 Quite to its value—very much indeed :
 —Are up to the protesting eyes of you
 In pride at being seated here for once—
 You'll turn it to such capital account !
 When somebody, through years and years to come,
 Hints of the bishop,—names me—that's enough :
 " Blougram ? I knew him "—(into it you slide)
 " Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
 All alone, we two ; he's a clever man :
 And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—
 Oh, there was wine, and good !—what with the wine . . .
 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk !
 He's no bad fellow, Blougram ; he had seen
 Something of mine he relished, some review :
 He's quite above their humbug in his heart,
 Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade.
 I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times :
 How otherwise ? I liked him, I confess ! "
Che, che, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
 Don't you protest now ! It's fair give and take ;
 You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths :
 The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays—
 You do despise me ; your ideal of life
 Is not the bishop's : you would not be I.
 You would like better to be Goethe, now,
 Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,
 Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred,
 Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
 Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
 So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
 You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.
 —That, my ideal never can include,
 Upon that element of truth and worth
 Never be based ! for say they make me Pope
 (They can't—suppose it for our argument)

Why, there I'm at my tether's end, I've reached
My height, and not a height which pleases you :
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor played Death on a stage,
With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinselled dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world ;
Then, going in the tire-room afterward,
Because the play was done, to shift himself,
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
The moment he had shut the closet door,
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now ?
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true !

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realized,
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realize one jot.
I am much, you are nothing ; you would be all,
I would be merely much : you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me : hearken why.
The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means : a very different thing !
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealize away,

Make paradise of London if you can,
You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile !

We mortals cross the ocean of this world
Each in his average cabin of a life ;
The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.
Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare ?
You come on shipboard with a landsman's list,
Of things he calls convenient : so they are !
An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long ;
And little Greek books, with the funny type
They get up well at Leipsic, fill the next :
Go on ! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes !
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add !
'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,
Since he more than the others brings with him
Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese !
Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
—Alas friend, here's the agent . . . is't the name ?
The captain, or whoever's master here—
You see him screw his face up ; what's his cry
Ere you set foot on shipboard ? “ Six feet square ! ”
If you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accordingly—
And if, in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano and bath, you come on board
Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landsmen see you off ;
Not afterward, when long ere half seas over,
You peep up from your utterly naked boards .
Into some snug and well-appointed berth,
Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug—
Put back the other, but don't jog the ice !)

And mortified you mutter " Well and good ;
He sits enjoying his sea-furniture ;
'Tis stout and proper, and there's store of it :
Though I've the better notion, all agree,
Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter,
Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances—
I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all ! "
And meantime you bring nothing : never mind—
You've proved your artist-nature : what you don't
You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the starting-place.
See my way : we're two college friends, suppose.
Prepare together for our voyage, then ;
Each note and check the other in his work,—
Here's mine, a bishop's outfit ; criticize !
What's wrong ? why won't you be a bishop too ?

Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith ; and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are ?
First, therefore, overhaul theology !
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard :
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend : well, I do not believe—
If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
You're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time.
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then

With both of us, though in unlike degree,
Missing full credence—overboard with them !
I mean to meet you on your own premise :
Good, there go mine in company with yours !

And now what are we ? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray ?
You'll guarantee me that ? Not so, I think !
In no wise ! all we've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
The gain ? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us ?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps ! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God,—what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could—then must have done long since :
If so, when, where and how ? some way must be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, " The Way, the Truth, the Life ? "

—That way

Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be indeed a road ;
While if he view it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable ! what's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side ?

And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith ?
And so we stumble at truth's very test !
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt :
We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

" Well," you rejoin, " the end's no worse, at least ;
We've reason for both colours on the board :
Why not confess then, where I drop the faith
And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you ? "

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,
And both things even,—faith and unbelief
Left to a man's choice,—we'll proceed a step,
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's—
The man made for the special life of the world—
Do you forget him ? I remember though !
Consult our ship's conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all ;
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I ;
I mean to take it as it is,—and you
Not so you'll take it,—though you get nought else.
I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit
In power, peace, pleasantness and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this

For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
—For you, it does, however?—that, we'll try!
'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least,
Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset, " Friends,
I absolutely and peremptorily
Believe!"—I say, faith is my waking life:
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking's the main point with us,
And my provision's for life's waking part.
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends;
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What's midnight doubt before the dayspring's faith?
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognize the night, give dreams their weight—
To be consistent you should keep your bed,
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man,
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!
And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream,
Live through the day and bustle as you please.
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
To unbelieve as I to still believe?
Well, and the common sense of the world calls you
Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me.
Its estimation, which is half the fight,
That's the first-cabin comfort I secure:
The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye!
Come, come, it's best believing, if we may;
You can't but own that!

Next, concede again,
If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith,
Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
To suit the world which gives us the good things.

In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent ;
The world detects him clearly, if he dare,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.
He may care little or he may care much
For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
Since various theories of life and life's
Success are extant which might easily
Comport with either estimate of these ;
And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
Because his fellow would choose otherwise :
We let him choose upon his own account
So long as he's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on,
We say he must succeed there or go hang.
Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most
Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was :
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge :
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now, there's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in—which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by ;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world—
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend !
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,

Myself—by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, and the tact
To let external forces work for me,
—Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread ;
Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride ;
It does so,—which for me's a great point gained,
Who have a soul and body that exact
A comfortable care in many ways.
There's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else :
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that's born of fear :
While at the same time, there's a taste I have,
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
The naked life is gross till clothed upon :
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take !
An uniform I wear though over-rich—
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine ;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore ! now men kneel
And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured ;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You'll reply,

So far my choice, no doubt, is a success ;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,

We speak of what is ; not of what might be,

And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough :
Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives !
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws ;
The tailless man exceeds me : but being tailed
I'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Or—our first simile—though you proved me doomed
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive
To make what use of each were possible ;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not ?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge ?
And that's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that ?
I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way :
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what's its name ?)
While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang

His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—
That even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute ; what's to note in that ?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack ;
Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands !
Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books—
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway : one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages,—just the men to shrink
From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave ?
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there's a thousand diamond weights between ?
So I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you'll find,
Profess themselves indignant, scandalized
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well : that's Schelling's way !
It's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago
They'd say, " What's strange ? Blougram of course
believes ; "
And, seventy years since, " disbelieves of course."
But now, " He may believe ; and yet, and yet
How can he ? " All eyes turn with interest.
Whereas, step off the line on either side—

You, for example, clever to a fault,
The rough and ready man who write apace,
Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—
You disbelieve ! Who wonders and who cares ?
Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,
All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom—
Believes ! Again, who wonders and who cares ?
But I, the man of sense and learning too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
I, to believe at this late time of day !
Enough ; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it's yours. Admire me as these may,
You don't. But whom at least do you admire ?
Present your own perfection, your ideal,
Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste !
Is it Napoleon you would have us grow ?
Concede the means ; allow his head and hand,
(A large concession, clever as you are)
Good ! In our common primal element
Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know—
We're still at that admission, recollect)
Where do you find—apart from, towering o'er
The secondary temporary aims
Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—
Where do you find his star ?—his crazy trust
God knows through what or in what ? it's alive
And shines and leads him, and that's all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall point
Such ends as his were, and direct the means
Of working out our purpose straight as his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
With after-care to justify the same ?
—Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve—
Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light away !
What's the vague good of the world, for which you dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions up ?

We neither of us see it ! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so forth,
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time !
Can I mistake for some clear word of God
(Which were my ample warrant for it all)
His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
“ The State, that’s I,” quack-nonsense about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his own ;
The whole to end that dismallest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the Church,
And resurrection of the old *régime* ?
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such ?
No : for, concede me but the merest chance
Doubt may be wrong—there’s judgment, life to come !
With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right ?
This present life is all ?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
That wedding an arch-duchess, wearing lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like !
Therefore I will not.

Take another case ;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poets ? shall we write
Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own,
Without a risk to run of either sort ?
I can’t !—to put the strongest reason first.
“ But try,” you urge, “ the trying shall suffice ;
The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life :

Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate ! ”
Spare my self-knowledge—there’s no fooling me !
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I’m a Shakespeare, let the well alone ;
Why should I try to be what now I am ?
If I’m no Shakespeare, as too probable,—
His power and consciousness and self-delight
And all we want in common, shall I find—
Trying for ever ?—while on points of taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I
Are dowered alike—I’ll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realizes most ?
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.
He had the imagination ; stick to that !
Let him say, “ In the face of my soul’s works
Your world is worthless and I touch it not
Lest I should wrong them ”—I’ll withdraw my plea.
But does he say so ? look upon his life !
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town ;
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,
Giulio Romano’s pictures, Dowland’s lute ;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once,
Than “ Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal.”
Why then should I who play that personage,
The very Pandulph Shakespeare’s fancy made,
Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays ?
Ah, the earth’s best can be but the earth’s best !
Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,

And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did.)
—Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top—
Eh, friend ? I could not fancy one of these ;
But, as I pour this claret, there they are :
I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside ; is my hap the worse for that ?
We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
And what I want, I have : he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had it when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,
He would not have it also in my sense.
We play one game ; I send the ball aloft
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
Which sends them back to me : I wish and get.
He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms,
Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game ?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.
Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat ;
Only, we can't command it ; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree :
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself :
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,
That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.
But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I'll find it food enough !

Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind ;
Such Luther's luck was : how shall such be mine ?
If he succeeded, nothing's left to do :
And if he did not altogether—well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
I might be also. But to what result ?
He looks upon no future : Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side ?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the world—
The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you : Blougram told it first
It could not owe a farthing,—not to him
More than Saint Paul ? 'twould press its pay, you think ?
Then add there's still that plaguy hundredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—
For what gain ? not for Luther's, who secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things.

“ Ay, but since really you lack faith,” you cry,
“ You run the same risk really on all sides,
In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
No more available to do faith's work
Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none ! ”

Softly, my friend ! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.
We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith :
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,

If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does ?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that !
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice :
That's our one act, the previous work's his own.
You criticize the soil ? it reared this tree—
This broad life and whatever fruit it bears !
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence
Against the thing done to me underground
By hell and all its brood, for aught I know ?
I say, whence sprang this ? shows it faith or doubt ?
All's doubt in me ; where's break of faith in this ?
It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure !
"What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done and said,
Like you this Christianity or not ?
It may be false, but will you wish it true ?
Has it your vote to be so if it can ?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago,
That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise ?
If you desire faith—then you've faith enough :
What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves ?
You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,
On hearsay ; it's a favourable one :
" But still," (you add) " there was no such good man,
Because of contradiction in the facts.
One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,
This Blougram ; yet throughout the tales of him

I see he figures as an Englishman."

Well, the two things are reconcilable.

But would I rather you discovered that,

Subjoining—" Still, what matter though they be ?

" Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask !

Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,

Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much

The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.

It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.

Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth :

I say it's meant to hide him all it can,

And that's what all the blessed evil's for.

Its use in Time is to environ us,

Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough

Against that sight till we can bear its stress.

Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain

And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart

Less certainly would wither up at once

Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.

But time and earth case-harden us to live ;

The feeblest sense is trusted most ; the child

Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,

Plays on and grows to be a man like us.

With me, faith means perpetual unbelief

Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot

Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.

Or, if that's too ambitious,—here's my box—

I need the excitation of a pinch

Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose

Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.

" Leave it in peace " advise the simple folk :

Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,

Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith !

You'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,
In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.

How you'd exult if I could put you back
Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,
(Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
That signifies some faith's about to die)
And set you square with Genesis again,—
When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot !
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act ? As other people felt and did ;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be !

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his
head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, in the middle : the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life !
Never leave growing till the life to come !
Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely :
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of nature, not to bend
If the Church bid them ?—brother Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—
On to the rack with faith !—is my advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, " It can't be—yet it shall !
Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope ?
Low things confound the high things ! " and so
forth.

That's better than acquitting God with grace
As some folks do. He's tried—no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—he may go !

You'll say, the old system's not so obsolete
But men believe still : ay, but who and where ?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes ;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him ? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking ? " No," he smiles ;
" Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves."

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,
My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it ; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points as this.
I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there's no truth in what I hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife : I cut and cut again !
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself ?
Experimentalize on sacred things !
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes : they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it,—you retort.
Your taste's worth mine ; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule :
We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
So, other matters equal, we ll revert
To the first problem—which, if solved my way
And thrown into the balance, turns the scale—
How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time
How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
The masses, and regard complacently
“ The cabin,” in our old phrase. Well, I do.
I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world prizes action, life and talk :
No prejudice to what next world may prove,
Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge
To observe then, is that I observe these now,
Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyment : well, my friend,
Why lose this life in the meantime, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense ?

Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still
Losing true life for ever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever being—

In the evolution of successive spheres—
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery
Halfway into the next still, on and off !
As when a traveller, bound from North to South,
Scouts fur in Russia ; what's its use in France ?
In France spurns flannel ; where's its need in Spain ?
In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers !
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease ?
I'm at ease now, friend ; worldly in this world,
I take and like its way of life ; I think
My brothers, who administer the means,
Live better for my comfort—that's good too ;
And God, if he pronounce upon such life,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If he keep silence,—why, for you or me
Or that brute-beast pulled up in to-day's *Times*,
What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life we lead ?

You meet me at this issue : you declare,—
All special-pleading done with, truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,
To say so, act up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then,—act away !
'Tis there I'm on the watch for you. How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern :
And how you'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there's no higher law that counterchecks.
Put natural religion to the test
You've just demolished the revealed with—quick,
Down to the root of all that checks your will,

All prohibition to lie, kill and thief
Or even to be an atheistic priest !
Suppose a pricking to incontinence—
Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
Threw club down and forewent his brains beside,
So, stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother-savage, club in hand ;
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves :
I read this in a French book t'other day.
Does law so analysed coerce you much ?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,
But you who reach where the first thread begins,
You'll soon cut that !—which means you can, but won't
Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,
You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule.
Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,
A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to get,
In case he has a master after all !
You own your instincts ? why, what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God
Ere I can be aught, do aught ?—no mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,
Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours !
I live my life here ; yours you dare not live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)
Disfigure such a life and call it names,
While, to your mind, remains another way
For simple men : knowledge and power have rights,
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth

If here or there or anywhere about :
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not angels, neither are they brutes :
Something we may see, all we cannot see.
What need of lying ? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute
In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud :
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,
For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there's any cloud at all.
You take the simple life—ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a face)
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move ? who has the right ?
I bid you ; but you are God's sheep, not mine :
“ *Pastor est tui Dominus.* ” You find
In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so well
You cannot please yourself, offending them ;
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you, real checks since you find them so ;
Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks :
And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name ?
If so, you beat—which means you are not I—
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,

But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir ; my age is double yours :
At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We have both minds and bodies much alike :
In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state ?
You're young, I'm old, you must be old one day ;
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch—
Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring—
With much beside you know or may conceive ?
Suppose we die to-night : well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,
While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
But you—the highest honour in your life,
The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power
And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what's my estimation by the fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secrecy on one of all these words !
You're shrewd and know that should you publish one
The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,
Who'd sneer—" the bishop's an arch-hypocrite
And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects myself—
My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.

What's your reward, self-abnegating friend ?
Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
An artist whose religion is his art—
I should have nothing to object : such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their druggot's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you,—you're just as little those as I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write stately for *Blackwood's Magazine*,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll
print—

Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens,—what's its name ?
“ The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
Limned after dark ! ” it made me laugh, I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you in ten
pounds.

—Success I recognize and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you choose, three words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin or New York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches ! be the first
“ Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence ”—
Or better simply say, “ The Outward-bound.”
Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad
About me on the church-door opposite.
You will not wait for that experience though,
I fancy, howsoever you decide,

To discontinue—not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least—despising me !

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows what
It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,
And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,
While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy :
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
“ On the whole,” he thought, “ I justify myself
On every point where cavillers like this
Oppugn my life : he tries one kind of fence,
I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him.
He's on the ground : if the ground should break away
I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.

His ground was over mine and broke the first :
So, let him sit with me this many a year ! ”

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the “ Outward-bound ”
Another way than Blougram’s purpose was :
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler’s-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia—there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED “ THE FAULTLESS PAINTER ”)

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart ?
I’ll work then for your friend’s friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it ? tenderly ?
Oh, I’ll content him,—but to-morrow, love !
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.

To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this !
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither ; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require :
It saves a model. So ! keep looking so—
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds !
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no less.
You smile ? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony !
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point ;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead ;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are !
I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us ! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak :
And that cartoon, the second from the door

—It is the thing, love ! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna !—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it ;
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past :
I do what many dream of all their lives
—Dream ? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less !
Well, less is more, Lucrezia : I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken ; what of that ? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered ; what of that ?

Speak as they please, what does the mountain care ?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for ? All is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art : the worse !
I know both what I want and what might gain ;
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
“ Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ” No
doubt.

Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way ;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it :
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
Nay, love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
“ God and the glory ! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that ?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo !
Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three ! ”
I might have done it for you. So it seems :

Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside ;
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls,
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward !
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct said :
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.

How could it end in any other way ?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was, to have ended there ; then, if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !
" Rafael did this, Andrea painted that ;
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
" Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours ! "
To Rafael's !—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !
Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he ? why, who but Michel Agnolo ?
Do you forget already words like those ?—
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend ?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now ; there's a star ;

Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me : oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with !
Let us but love each other. Must you go ?
That Cousin here again ? he waits outside ?
Must see you—you, and not with me ? Those loans ?
More gaming debts to pay ? you smiled for that ?
Well, let smiles buy me ! have you more to spend ?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth ?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time ! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you ? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs ; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff !
Love, does that please you ! Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin ! what does he to please you more ?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.

Since there my past life lies, why alter it ?
The very wrong to Francis ! it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own ? you see
How one gets rich ! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died :
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try !
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have ?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine ! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle ! Go, my love.

ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished !
Take them, love, the book and me together :
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil

Else he only used to draw Madonnas :
These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
Who that one, you ask ? Your heart instructs you.
Did she live and love it all her lifetime ?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's ?

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not ? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, " Ours, the treasure !
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel :
Whom to please ? You whisper " Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—
Dante, who loved well because he hated,

Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel,—
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he—" Certain people of importance "
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
" Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
Says the poet—" Then I stopped my painting."

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not ?—than read a fresh Inferno.

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those " people of importance : "
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture ?
This : no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry,—
Does he paint ? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write ? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

Wherefore ? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement !
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,

Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—" Shall smiting help us? "
When they drank and sneered—" A stroke is easy! "
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—" But drought was pleasant."
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph ;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish ;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat ;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
" How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us ? "
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
" Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant !
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert ;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me ;

So it seems : I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me ;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you
Other heights in other lives, God willing :
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, love !

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—
Pray you, look on these my men and women
Take and keep my fifty poems finished ;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also !
Poor the speech ; be how I speak, for all things.

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the moon's self !
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.

Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy ?
Nay : for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even !
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better !
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals ?
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain ?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also !

What were seen ? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,

Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her !

This I say of me, but think of you, love !
This to you—yourself my moon of poets !
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you !
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you.
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom !

R. B.

London, September 1855

GOLD HAIR

A STORY OF PORNIC

OH, the beautiful girl, too white,
Who lived at Pornic, down by the sea,
Just where the sea and the Loire unite !
And a boasted name in Brittany
She bore, which I will not write.

Too white, for the flower of life is red ;
Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen

Of a soul that is meant (her parents said)
To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
And blossom in heaven instead.

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair !
One grace that grew to its full on earth :
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so spare,
And her waist want half a girdle's girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss,
Freshness and fragrance—floods of it, too !
Gold, did I say ? Nay, gold's mere dross :
Here, Life smiled, " Think what I meant to do ! "
And Love sighed, " Fancy, my loss ! "

So, when she died, it was scarce more strange
Than that, when some delicate evening dies,
And you follow its spent sun's pallid range,
There's a shoot of colour startles the skies
With sudden, violent change,—

That, while the breath was nearly to seek,
As they put the little cross to her lips,
She changed ; a spot came out on her cheek,
A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
And she broke forth, " I must speak ! "

" Not my hair ! " made the girl her moan—
" All the rest is gone or to go ;
But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
Let it stay in the grave, that the ghosts may know !
Leave my poor gold hair alone ! "

The passion thus vented, dead lay she ;
Her parents sobbed their worst on that,

All friends joined in, nor observed degree :
For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
As it spread—not flowing free,

But curled around her brow, like a crown,
And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,
And calmed about her neck—ay, down
To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
I' the gold, it reached her gown.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed its hair :
E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,
As he planted the crucifix with care
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

And thus was she buried, inviolate
Of body and soul, in the very space
By the altar ; keeping saintly state
In Pornic church, for her pride of race,
Pure life and piteous fate.

And in after-time would your fresh tear fall,
Though your mouth might twitch with a dubious
smile,
As they told you of gold both robe and pall,
How she prayed them leave it alone awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

Years flew ; this legend grew at last
The life of the lady ; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
Of lover and friend, was summed in one
Sentence survivors passed :

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not earth ;
Had turned an angel before the time :

Yet, since she was mortal, in such dearth
Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

At little pleasant Pornic church,
It chanced, the pavement wanted repair,
Was taken to pieces : left in the lurch,
A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

'Twas the space where our sires would lay a saint,
A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments quaint,
Dame with chased ring and jewelled rose,
Things sanctity saves from taint ;

So we come to find them in after-days
When the corpse is presumed to have done with
gauds
Of use to the living, in many ways :
For the boys get pelf, and the town applauds,
And the church deserves the praise.

They grubbed with a will : and at length—*O cor*
Humanum, pectora cæca, and the rest !—
They found—no gaud they were prying for,
No ring, no rose, but—who would have guessed ?—
A double Louis-d'or !

Here was a case for the priest : he heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid
Finger on nose, smiled, " A little bird
Chirps in my ear : " then, " Bring a spade,
Dig deeper ! "—he gave the word.

And lo, when they came to the coffin-lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it once,

Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged amid
 A mint of money, it served for the nonce
 To hold in its hair-heaps hid !

Hid there ? Why ? Could the girl be wont
 (She the stainless soul) to treasure up
 Money, earth's trash and heaven's affront ?
 Had a spider found out the communion-cup,
 Was a toad in the christening-font ?

Truth is truth : too true it was.
 Gold ! She hoarded and hugged it first,
 Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it—alas—
 Till the humour grew to a head and burst,
 And she cried, at the final pass,—

“ Talk not of God, my heart is stone !
 Nor lover nor friend—be gold for both !
 Gold I lack ; and, my all, my own,
 It shall hide in my hair. I scarce die loth
 If they let my hair alone ! ”

Louis-d'ors, some six times five,
 And duly double, every piece.
 Now, do you see ? With the priest to shrive,
 With parents preventing her soul's release
 By kisses that kept alive,—

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
 With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering still,
 An instinct had bidden the girl's hand grope
 For gold, the true sort—“ Gold in heaven, if you will ;
 But I keep earth's too, I hope.”

Enough ! The priest took the grave's grim yield :
 The parents, they eyed that price of sin
 As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
 On the place to *bury strangers in*,
 The hideous Potter's Field.

But the priest bethought him : “ ‘ Milk that’s spilt ’
 —You know the adage ! Watch and pray !
 Saints tumble to earth with so slight a tilt !
 It would build a new altar ; that, we may ! ”
 And the altar therewith was built.

Why I deliver this horrible verse ?
 As the text of a sermon, which now I preach :
 Evil or good may be better or worse
 In the human heart, but the mixture of each
 Is a marvel and a curse.

The candid incline to surmise of late
 That the Christian faith may be false, I find ;
 For our Essays-and-Reviews’ debate
 Begins to tell on the public mind,
 And Colenso’s words have weight :

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
 See reasons and reasons ; this, to begin :
 ’Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
 At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,
 The Corruption of Man’s Heart.

ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON THE MUSICAL
 INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION)

I

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I
 build,
 Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
 Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when
 Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep
removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable
Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess
he loved !

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of
mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned
to raise !
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and
now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his
praise !
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down
to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my
palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

III

And another would mount and march, like the excellent
minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many
a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest :
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to
spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my
soul was in sight.

IV

In sight ? Not half ! for it seemed, it was certain, to
match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I ;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to
reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to
scale the sky :
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt
with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering
star ;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze : and they did not pale nor
pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more
near nor far.

V

Nay more ; for there wanted not who walked in the glare
and glow,
Presences plain in the place ; or, fresh from the Proto-
plast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should
blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking
at last ;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the
body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world
worth their new :
What never had been, was now ; what was, as it shall be
anon ;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both ? for I was
made perfect too.

VI

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of
my soul,

All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed
visibly forth,
All through music and me ! For think, had I painted
the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so
wonder-worth :
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect pro-
ceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale
is told ;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled :—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they
are !
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to
man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound,
but a star.
Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is
nought ;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is
said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought
And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and
bow the head !

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that come
too slow ;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he
feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was
to go.

Never to be again ! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance : is this your comfort
to me ?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God : ay,
what was, shall be.

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable
Name ?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with
hands !
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the
same ?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy
power expands ?
There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall
live as before ;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more ;
On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect
round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist ;
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good,
nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by-
and-by.

XI

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or
agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing
might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should
be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal
and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians
know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the
deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place
is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed " Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall ? "
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned " Nor Jove, nor Mars ;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends
 them all ! "

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast :
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men ;
Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the maw-
 crammed beast ?

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive !
A spark disturbs our clod ;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turn's earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !
Be our joys three-parts pain !
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the
 throe !

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me :
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the
scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play ?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way ?

Yet gifts should prove their use :
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn :
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole ;
Should not the heart beat once “ How good to live and
learn ? ”

Not once beat “ Praise be Thine !
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too :
Perfect I call Thy plan :
Thanks that I was a man !
Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt
do ! ”

For pleasant is this flesh ;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest ;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best !

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh
helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone,
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,

Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
" This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain ;
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made ;
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age ; wait death nor be afraid !

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past !
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right ? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last !

Now, who shall arbitrate ?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive ;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me : we all surmise,
They, this thing, and I, that : whom shall my soul believe ?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price ;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice :

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account ;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount :

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor ! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
" Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past gone, seize
to-day ! "

Fool ! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall ;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be :
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest :
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?
What though, about thy rim,
Scull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress ?

Look not thou down but up !
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow !
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with
earth's wheel ?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men ;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst :

So, take and use Thy work !
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same !

CONFESSIONS

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears ?

“ Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears ? ”
Ah, reverend sir, not I !

What I viewed there once, what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall : is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye ?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall ;
And that farthest bottle labelled “ Ether ”
Is the house o'er-topping all.

At a terrace, somewhat near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl : I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind's out of tune.

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except :
They styled their house “ The Lodge.”

What right had a lounge up their lane ?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled " Ether,"
And stole from stair to stair,

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet :
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet !

MAY AND DEATH

I WISH that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things ;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

So, for their sake, be May still May !
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me : I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

That, they might spare ; a certain wood
Might miss the plant ; their loss were small :
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

PROSPICE

FEAR death ?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go :
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest !

A FACE

If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers !

No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile ; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all : but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts !
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb :
But these are only massed there, I should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momentarily
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

A LIKENESS

SOME people hang portraits up
In a room where they dine or sup :
And the wife clinks tea-things under,
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
Asks, " Who was the lady, I wonder ? "
" 'Tis a daub John bought at a sale,"
Quoth the wife,—looks black as thunder :
" What a shade beneath her nose !
Snuff-taking, I suppose,—"
Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there's no wife in the case,
But the portrait's queen of the place,

Alone mid the other spoils
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist ("not, alas! mine,
But my master's, the Tipton Slasher")
And the cards where pistol-balls mark ace,
And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
And the chamois-horns ("shot in the Chablais")
And prints—Rarey drumming on Cruiser,
And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
And the little edition of Rabelais :
Where a friend, with both hands in his pockets,
May saunter up close to examine it,
And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb in it,
"But the eyes are half out of their sockets ;
That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis :
Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy !
What, is not she Jane ? Then, who is she ? "

All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint ;
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
Yet a fact (take my conviction)
Because it has more than a hint
Of a certain face, I never
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
In women I've seen the face of :
Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
Fifty in one portfolio.
When somebody tries my claret,
We turn round chairs to the fire,
Chirp over days in a garret,
Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
Taste the good fruits of our leisure,

Talk about pencil and lyre,
And the National Portrait Gallery :
Then I exhibit my treasure.
After we've turned over twenty,
And the debt of wonder my crony owes
Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
He stops me—" *Festina lentè !*
What's that sweet thing there, the etching ? "
How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,
How my cheeks grow red as tomatoes,
How my heart leaps ! But hearts, after leaps, ache.

" By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
That other, you praised, of Volpato's."
The fool ! would he try a flight further and say—
He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with,—why, I'll not
engage
But that, half in a rapture and half in a rage,
I should toss him the thing's self—" 'Tis only a duplicate,
A thing of no value ! Take it, I supplicate ! "

MR. SLUDGE, " THE MEDIUM "

Now, don't stir ! Don't expose me ! Just this once !
This was the first and only time, I'll swear,—
Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only time,
I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the soul
Of Her who hears—(your sainted mother, sir !)
All, except this last accident, was truth—
This little kind of slip !—and even this,
It was your own wine, sir, the good champagne,
(I took it for Catawba, you're so kind)
Which put the folly in my head !

“ Get up ? ”

You still inflict on me that terrible face ?
You show no mercy ?—Not for Her dear sake,
The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath even now
Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel something, sir ?)
You'll tell ?

Go tell, then ! Who the devil cares
What such a rowdy chooses to . . .

Aie—aie—aie !

Please, sir ! your thumbs are through my windpipe, sir !
Ch—ch !

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now !
Oh Lord ! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
When your departed mother spoke those words
Of peace through me, and moved you, sir, so much,
You gave me—(very kind it was of you)
These shirt-studs—(better take them back again,
Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so soon
A trifle of trick, all through a glass too much
Of his own champagne, would change my best of friends
Into an angry gentleman !

Though, 'twas wrong.
I don't contest the point ; your anger's just :
Whatever put such folly in my head,
I know 'twas wicked of me. There's a thick
Dusk undeveloped spirit (I've observed)
Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,
Or else an Irish emigrant's ; yourself
Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,
When we had summoned Franklin to clear up
A point about those shares in the telegraph :
Ay, and he swore . . . or might it be Tom Paine ? . . .
Thumping the table close by where I crouched,
He'd do me soon a mischief : that's come true !

Why, now your face clears ! I was sure it would !
Then, this one time . . . don't take your hand away,
Through yours I surely kiss your mother's hand . . .
You'll promise to forgive me ?—or, at least,
Tell nobody of this ? Consider, sir !
What harm can mercy do ? Would but the shade
Of the venerable dead—one just vouchsafe
A rap or tip ! What bit of paper's here ?
Suppose we take a pencil, let her write,
Make the least sign, she urges on her child
Forgiveness ? There now ! Eh ? Oh ! 'Twas your
foot,
And not a natural creak, sir ?

Answer, then !
Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I'm waiting to say " thrice ! "
All to no use ? No sort of hope for me ?
It's all to post to Greeley's newspaper ?

What ? If I told you all about the tricks ?
Upon my soul !—the whole truth, and nought else,
And how there's been some falsehood—for your part,
Will you engage to pay my passage out,
And hold your tongue until I'm safe on board ?
England's the place, not Boston—no offence !
I see what makes you hesitate : don't fear !
I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,
Yes, this time really it's upon my soul !
Be my salvation !—under Heaven, of course.
I'll tell some queer things. Sixty Vs must do.
A trifle, though, to start with ! We'll refer
The question to this table ?

How you're changed !
Then split the difference ; thirty more, we'll say.
Ay, but you leave my presents ! Else I'll swear
'Twas all through those : you wanted yours again,
So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back !

Tread on a worm, it turns, sir ! If I turn,
Your fault ! 'Tis you'll have forced me ! Who's obliged
To give up life yet try no self-defence ?
At all events, I'll run the risk. Eh ?

Done !

May I sit, sir ? This dear old table, now !
Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar !
I've been so happy with you ! Nice stuffed chairs,
And sympathetic sideboards ; what an end
To all the instructive evenings ! (It's alight.)
Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.
Here goes,—but keep your temper, or I'll scream !

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-iddle-ol !

You see, sir, it's your own fault more than mine ;
It's all your fault, you curious gentlefolk !
You're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry,
So clever, while you cling by half a claw
To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,
Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch
Because you chose it, so it must be safe.
Oh, otherwise you're sharp enough ! You spy
Who slips, who slides, who holds by help of wing,
Wanting real foothold,—who can't keep upright
On the other perch, your neighbour chose, not you :
There's no outwitting you respecting him !
For instance, men love money—that, you know—
And what men do to gain it : well, suppose
A poor lad, say a help's son in your house,
Listening at keyholes, hears the company
Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so forth,
How hard they are to get, how good to hold,
How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in pops he—
“ I've got a V-note ! ”—what do you say to him ?
What's your first word which follows your last kick ?
“ Where did you steal it, rascal ? ” That's because
He finds you, fain would fool you, off your perch,

Not on the special piece of nonsense, sir,
Elected your parade-ground : let him try
Lies to the end of the list,—“ He picked it up,
His cousin died and left it him by will,
The President flung it to him, riding by,
An actress trucked it for a curl of his hair,
He dreamed of luck and found his shoe enriched,
He dug up clay, and out of clay made gold ”—
How would you treat such possibilities ?
Would not you, prompt, investigate the case
With cow-hide ? “ Lies, lies, lies,” you’d shout : and
why ?

Which of the stories might not prove mere truth ?
This last, perhaps, that clay was turned to coin !
Let’s see, now, give him me to speak for him !
How many of your rare philosophers,
In plaguy books I’ve had to dip into,
Believed gold could be made thus, saw it made
And made it ? Oh, with such philosophers
You’re on your best behaviour ! While the lad—
With him, in a trice, you settle likelihoods,
Nor doubt a moment how he got his prize :
In his case, you hear, judge and execute,
All in a breath : so would most men of sense.

But let the same lad hear you talk as grand
At the same keyhole, you and company,
Of signs and wonders, the invisible world ;
How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
More than our vulgarest incredulity ;
How good men have desired to see a ghost,
What Johnson used to say, what Wesley did,
Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-diddle-dee :—
If he then break in with, “ Sir, I saw a ghost ! ”
Ah, the ways change ! He finds you perched and prim ;
It’s a conceit of yours that ghosts may be :
There’s no talk now of cow-hide. “ Tell it out !
Don’t fear us ! Take your time and recollect !

Sit down first : try a glass of wine, my boy !
 And, David, (is not that your Christian name ?)
 Of all things, should this happen twice—it may—
 Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let us know ! ”
 Does the boy blunder, blurt out this, blab that,
 Break down in the other, as beginners will ?
 All’s candour, all’s considerateness—“ No haste !
 Pause and collect yourself ! We understand !
 That’s the bad memory, or the natural shock,
 Or the unexplained *phenomena* ! ”

Egad,

The boy takes heart of grace ; finds, never fear,
 The readiest way to ope your own heart wide,
 Show—what I call your peacock-perch, pet post
 To strut, and spread the tail, and squawk upon !
 “ Just as you thought, much as you might expect !
 There be more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,” . . .
 And so on. Shall not David take the hint,
 Grow bolder, stroke you down at quickened rate ?
 If he ruffle a feather, it’s “ Gently, patiently !
 Manifestations are so weak at first !
 Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all short,
 Cures with a vengeance ! ”

There, sir, that’s your style !

You and your boy—such pains bestowed on him,
 Or any headpiece of the average worth,
 To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him apace,
 Make him a Person (“ Porson ? ” thank you, sir !)
 Much more, proficient in the art of lies.
 You never leave the lesson ! Fire alight,
 Catch you permitting it to die ! You’ve friends ;
 There’s no withholding knowledge,—least from those
 Apt to look elsewhere for their souls’ supply :
 Why should not you parade your lawful prize ?
 Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
 Hits on a first edition,—he henceforth

Gives it his name, grows notable : how much more,
Who ferrets out a "medium" ? "David's yours,
You highly-favoured man ? Then, pity souls
Less privileged ! Allow us share your luck !"
So, David holds the circle, rules the roast,
Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass ball,
Sets to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
As the case may be.

Now mark ! To be precise—
Though I say, "lies" all these, at this first stage,
'Tis just for science' sake : I call such grubs
By the name of what they'll turn to, dragonflies.
Strictly, it's what good people style untruth ;
But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown thing :
It's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-work—
What never meant to be so very bad—
The knack of story-telling, brightening up
Each dull old bit of fact that drops its shine.
One does see somewhat when one shuts one's eyes,
If only spots and streaks ; tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves : and pens, good Lord,
Who knows if you drive them or they drive you ?
'Tis but a foot in the water and out again ;
Not that duck-under which decides your dive.
Note this, for it's important : listen why.

I'll prove, you push on David till he dives
And ends the shivering. Here's your circle, now :
Two-thirds of them, with heads like you their host,
Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,
"Lord, who'd have thought it !" But there's always one
Looks wise, compassionately smiles, submits
"Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
But—do you feel so certain of that boy's ?
Really, I wonder ! I confess myself
More chary of my faith !" That's galling, sir !
What, he the investigator, he the sage,

When all's done ? Then, you just have shut your eyes,
 Opened your mouth, and gulped down David whole,
 You ! Terrible were such catastrophe !
 So, evidence is redoubled, doubled again,
 And doubled besides ; once more, " He heard, we heard,
 You and they heard, your mother and your wife,
 Your children and the stranger in your gates :
 Did they or did they not ? " So much for him,
 The black sheep, guest without the wedding-garb,
 And doubting Thomas ! Now's your turn to crow :
 " He's kind to think you such a fool : Sludge cheats ?
 Leave you alone to take precautions ! "

Straight

The rest join chorus. Thomas stands abashed,
 Sips silent some such beverage as this,
 Considers if it be harder, shutting eyes
 And gulping David in good fellowship,
 Than going elsewhere, getting, in exchange,
 With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
 Some just as tough a morsel. Over the way,
 Holds Captain Sparks his court : is it better there ?
 Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-scenes,
 And Mexican War exploits to swallow plump
 If you'd be free of the stove-side, rocking-chair,
 And trio of affable daughters ?

Doubt succumbs !

Victory ! All your circle's yours again !
 Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
 David's performance rounds, each chink gets patched,
 Every protrusion of a point's filed fine,
 All's fit to set a-rolling round the world,
 And then return to David finally,
 Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-inch.
 Here's a choice birth of the supernatural,
 Poor David's pledged to ! You've employed no tool
 That laws exclaim at, save the devil's own,
 Yet screwed him into henceforth gulling you
 To the top of your bent,—all out of one half-lie !

You hold, if there's one half or a hundredth part
Of a lie, that's his fault,—his be the penalty !
I dare say ! You'd prove firmer in his place ?
You'd find the courage,—that first flurry over,
That mild bit of romancing-work at end,—
To interpose with " It gets serious, this ;
Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost at all.
Inform your friends I made . . . well, fools of them,
And found you ready made. I've lived in clover
These three weeks : take it out in kicks of me ! "
I doubt it. Ask your conscience ! Let me know,
Twelve months hence, with how few embellishments
You've told almighty Boston of this passage
Of arms between us, your first taste of the foil
From Sludge who could not fence, sir ! Sludge, your boy !
I lied, sir,—there ! I got up from my gorge
On offal in the gutter, and preferred
Your canvas-backs : I took their carver's size,
Measured his modicum of intelligence,
Tickled him on the cockles of his heart
With a raven feather, and next week found myself
Sweet and clean, dining daintily, dizen'd smart,
Set on a stool buttressed by ladies' knees,
Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
Encouraging my story to uncoil
And creep out from its hole, inch after inch,
" How last night, I no sooner snug in bed,
Tucked up, just as they left me,—than came raps !
While a light whisked " . . . " Shaped somewhat like a
star ? "
" Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am."—" So we
thought !
And any voice ? Not yet ? Try hard, next time,
If you can't hear a voice ; we think you may :
At least, the Pennsylvanian ' mediums ' did."
Oh, next time comes the voice ! " Just as we hoped ! "
Are not the hoppers proud now, pleased, profuse
Of the natural acknowledgment ?

Of course !

So, off we push, illy-oh-yo, trim the boat,
On we sweep with a cataract ahead,
We're midway to the Horse-shoe : stop, who can,
The dance of bubbles gay about our prow !
Experiences become worth waiting for,
Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost mind,
And compliment the " medium " properly,
Concern themselves about his Sunday coat,
See rings on his hand with pleasure. Ask yourself
How you'd receive a course of treats like these !
Why, take the quietest hack and stall him up,
Cram him with corn a month, then out with him
Among his mates on a bright April morn,
With the turf to tread ; see if you find or no
A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts !
Much more a youth whose fancies sprout as rank
As toadstool-clump from melon-bed. 'Tis soon,
" Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and carry,
Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and hang yourself ! "
I'm spared all further trouble ; all's arranged ;
Your circle does my business ; I may rave
Like an epileptic dervish in the books,
Foam, fling myself flat, rend my clothes to shreds ;
No matter : lovers, friends and countrymen
Will lay down spiritual laws, read wrong things right
By the rule of reverse. If Francis Verulam
Styles himself Bacon, spells the name beside
With a *y* and a *k*, says he drew breath in York,
Gave up the ghost in Wales when Cromwell reigned,
(As, sir, we somewhat fear he was apt to say,
Before I found the useful book that knows)
Why, what harm's done ? The circle smiles apace,
" It was not Bacon, after all, do you see !
We understand ; the trick's but natural :
Such spirits' individuality
Is hard to put in evidence : they incline
To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped sorts.

You see, their world's much-like a jail broke loose,
While this of ours remains shut, bolted, barred,
With a single window to it. Sludge, our friend,
Serves as this window, whether thin or thick,
Or stained or stainless ; he's the medium-pane
Through which, to see us and be seen, they peep :
They crowd each other, hustle for a chance,
Tread on their neighbour's kibes, play tricks enough !
Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve aside ?
Up in his place jumps Barnum—' I'm your man,
' I'll answer you for Bacon ! ' Try once more ! "

Or else it's—" What's a ' medium ? ' He's a means,
Good, bad, indifferent, still the only means
Spirits can speak by ; he may misconceive,
Stutter and stammer,—he's their Sludge and drudge,
Take him or leave him ; they must hold their peace,
Or else, put up with having knowledge strained
To half-expression through his ignorance.
Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to shed
New music he's brimful of ; why, he turns
The handle of this organ, grinds with Sludge,
And what he poured in at the mouth o' the mill
As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now !)
Comes from the hopper as bran-new Sludge, nought else,
The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural F,
Or the ' Stars and Stripes ' set to consecutive fourths."

Sir, where's the scrape you did not help me through,
You that are wise ? And for the fools, the folk
Who came to see,—the guests, (observe that word !)
Pray do you find guests criticize your wine,
Your furniture, your grammar, or your nose ?
Then, why your " medium " ? What's the difference ?
Prove your Madeira red-ink and gamboge,—
Your Sludge, a cheat—then, somebody's a goose
For vaunting both as genuine. " Guests ! " Don't
fear !

They'll make a wry face, nor too much of that,
And leave you in your glory.

“ No, sometimes
They doubt and say as much ! ” Ay, doubt they do !
And what's the consequence ? “ Of course they
doubt ”—

(You triumph) “ that explains the hitch at once !
Doubt posed our ‘ medium,’ puddled his pure mind ;
He gave them back their rubbish : pitch chaff in,
Could flour come out o’ the honest mill ? ” So, prompt
Applaud the faithful : cases flock in point,
“ How, when a mocker willed a ‘ medium ’ once
Should name a spirit James whose name was George,
‘ James,’ cried the ‘ medium,’—’twas the test of truth ! ”
In short, a hit proves much, a miss proves more.
Does this convince ? The better : does it fail ?
Time for the double-shotted broadside, then—
The grand means, last resource. Look black and big !
“ You style us idiots, therefore—why stop short ?
Accomplices in rascality : this we hear
In our own house, from our invited guest
Found brave enough to outrage a poor boy
Exposed by our good faith ! Have you been heard ?
Now, then, hear us ; one man’s not quite worth twelve.
You see a cheat ? Here’s some twelve see an ass :
Excuse me if I calculate : good day ! ”
Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs explode,
Sludge waves his hat in triumph !

Or—he don’t.
There’s something in real truth (explain who can !)
One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and won’t munch
Because he spies a corn-bag : hang that truth,
It spoils all dainties proffered in its place !
I’ve felt at times when, cockered, cossetted
And coddled by the aforesaid company,

Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never fear,
But o'er their shoulders spit at the flying man,—
I've felt a child ; only, a fractious child
That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt, grandmother,
Who keep him from the kennel, sun and wind,
Good fun and wholesome mud,—enjoined be sweet,
And comely and superior,—eyes askance
The ragged sons of the gutter at their game,
Fain would be down with them i' the thick of the filth,
Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking plain,
And calling granny the grey old cat she is.
I've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,
Huggings and humbug—gnashed my teeth to mark
A decent dog pass ! It's too bad, I say,
Ruining a soul so !

But what's " so," what's fixed,
Where may one stop? Nowhere! The cheating's nursed
Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
To just your length, sir ! I'd stop soon enough :
But you're for progress. " All old, nothing new ?
Only the usual talking through the mouth,
Or writing by the hand ? I own, I thought
This would develop, grow demonstrable,
Make doubt absurd, give figures we might see,
Flowers we might touch. There's no one doubts you,
Sludge !

You dream the dreams, you see the spiritual sights,
The speeches come in your head, beyond dispute.
Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all mouths,
We want some outward manifestation !—well,
The Pennsylvanians gained such ; why not Sludge ?
He may improve with time ! "

Ay, that he may !
He sees his lot : there's no avoiding fate.
'Tis a trifle at first. " Eh, David ? Did you hear ?
You jogged the table, your foot caused the squeak,

This time you're . . . joking, are you not, my boy ? ”
“ N-n-no ! ”—and I'm done for, bought and sold hence-
forth.

The old good easy jog-trot way, the . . . eh ?
The . . . not so very false, as falsehood goes,
The spinning out and drawing fine, you know,—
Really mere novel-writing of a sort,
Acting, or improvising, make-believe,
Surely not downright cheater, —anyhow,
'Tis done with and my lot cast ; Cheat's my name :
The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
Has settled what you'll have the souchong's smack :
The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.

Then, it's so cruel easy ! Oh, those tricks
That can't be tricks, those feats by sleight of hand,
Clearly no common conjurer's !—no, indeed !
A conjurer ? Choose me any craft in the world
A man puts hand to ; and with six months' pains,
I'll play you twenty tricks miraculous
To people untaught the trade : have you seen glass
blown,
Pipes pierced ? Why, just this biscuit that I chip,
Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
To the oven ? Try and do it ! Take my word,
Practise but half as much, while limbs are lithe,
To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your joints,
Manage your feet, dispose your hands aright,
Work wires that twitch the curtains, play the glove
At end of your slipper,—then put out the lights
And . . . there, there, all you want you'll get, I hope !
I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.

Now, lights on table again ! I've done my part,
You take my place while I give thanks and rest.
“ Well, Judge Humgruffin, what's your verdict, sir ?
You, hardest head in the United States,—
Did you detect a cheat here ? Wait ! Let's see !

Just an experiment first, for candour's sake !
I'll try and cheat you, Judge ! The table tilts :
Is it I that move it ? Write ! I'll press your hand :
Cry when I push, or guide your pencil, Judge ! "
Sludge still triumphant ! " That a rap, indeed ?
That, the real writing ? Very like a whale !
Then, if, sir, you—a most distinguished man,
And, were the Judge not here, I'd say, . . . no matter !
Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us in,—
There's little fear that Sludge will ! "

Won't he, ma'am ?

But what if our distinguished host, like Sludge,
Bade God bear witness that he played no trick,
While you believed that what produced the raps
Was just a certain child who died, you know,
And whose last breath you thought your lips had felt ?
Eh ? That's a capital point, ma'am : Sludge begins
At your entreaty with your dearest dead,
The little voice set lisping once again,
The tiny hand made feel for yours once more,
The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams,
Which image, if a word had chanced recall,
The customary cloud would cross your eyes,
Your heart return the old tick, pay its pang !
A right mood for investigation, this !
One's at one's ease with Saul and Jonathan,
Pompey and Cæsar : but one's own lost child . . .
I wonder, when you heard the first cold drop
From the spadeful at the grave-side, felt you free
To investigate who twitched your funeral scarf
Or brushed your flounces ? Then, it came of course,
You should be stunned and stupid ; then, (how else ?)
Your breath stopped with your blood, your brain struck
work.

But now, such causes fail of such effects,
All's changed,—the little voice begins afresh,
Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and try

And touch the truth. "Tests? Didn't the creature tell
 Its nurse's name, and say it lived six years,
 And rode a rocking-horse? Enough of tests!
 Sludge never could learn that!"

He could not, eh?

You compliment him. "Could not?" Speak for yourself!

I'd like to know the man I ever saw
 Once,—never mind where, how, why, when,—once saw,
 Of whom I do not keep some matter in mind
 He'd swear I "could not" know, sagacious soul!
 What? Do you live in this world's blow of blacks,
 Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
 Nor find one smut has settled on your nose,
 Of a smut's worth, no more, no less?—one fact
 Out of the drift of facts, whereby you learn
 What some one was, somewhere, somewhen, somewhy?
 You don't tell folk—"See what has stuck to me!
 Judge Humgruffin, our most distinguished man,
 Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife
 Thought to have married Miggs, missed him, hit you!"—
 Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-week?
 "No," you reply, "what use retailing it?
 Why should I?" But, you see, one day you *should*,
 Because one day there's much use,—when this fact
 Brings you the Judge upon both gouty knees
 Before the supernatural; proves that Sludge
 Knows, as you say, a thing he "could not" know:
 Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an outstretched face,
 The way the wind drives?

"Could not!" Look you now,

I'll tell you a story! There's a whiskered chap,
 A foreigner, that teaches music here
 And gets his bread,—knowing no better way:
 He says, the fellow who informed of him
 And made him fly his country and fall West,

Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched soles and sang,
In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long ;
Never asked questions, stopped to listen or look,
Nor lifted nose from lapstone ; let the world
Roll round his three-legged stool, and news run in
The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked up.
Well, that man went on Sundays, touched his pay,
And took his praise from government, you see ;
For something like two dollars every week,
He'd engage tell you some one little thing
Of some one man, which led to many more,
(Because one truth leads right to the world's end,)
And make you that man's master—when he dined
And on what dish, where walked to keep his health
And to what street. His trade was, throwing thus
His sense out, like an ant-cater's long tongue,
Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
And when 'twas crusted o'er with creatures—slick,
Their juice enriched his palate. " Could not Sludge ! "

I'll go yet a step further, and maintain,
Once the imposture plunged its proper depth
In the rotten of your natures, all of you,—
(If one's not mad nor drunk, and hardly then)
It's impossible to cheat—that's, be found out !
Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of mine,
All to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,
Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain confess,
And so has come to grief ! You'll find, I think,
Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your face.
There now, you've told them ! What's their prompt
' reply ?

" Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated me,
I'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at times ;
That's in the ' medium ' -nature, thus they're made,
Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to scratch.
And so all cats are ; still, a cat's the beast

You coax the strange electric sparks from out,
By rubbing back its fur ; not so a dog,
Nor lion, nor lamb : 'tis the cat's nature, sir !
Why not the dog's ? Ask God, who made them beasts !
D'ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced man
(Like me "—aside)—" like you yourself,"—(aloud)
"—He's stuff to make a ' medium ? ' Bless your soul,
'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halves,
Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire !
We must take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you—
How, I can't say, not being there to watch :
He was tried, was tempted by your easiness,—
He did not take in me ! "

Thank you for Sludge !

I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
When what you hear's my best word ? 'Tis a challenge ;
" Snap at all strangers, half-tamed prairie-dog,
So you cower duly at your keeper's nod !
Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them
Only to me ! Cheat others if you can,
Me, if you dare ! " And, my wise sir, I dared—
Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,
And had the help of your vaunted manliness
To bully the incredulous. You used me ?
Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,
And straight they'd own the error ! Who was the fool
When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed
Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce
Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke
Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek
In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms
To crotchet and quaver ? I've made a spirit squeak
In sham voice for a minute, then outbroke
Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,

Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised.
" All right ! The ghost was merely using Sludge,
Suiting itself from his imperfect stock ! "
Don't talk of gratitude to me ! For what ?
For being treated as a showman's ape,
Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
So long as the ape be in it and no man—
Because a nut pays every mood alike.
Curse your superior, superintending sort,
Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb
To cure your chimney, bid a " medium " lie
To sweep you truth down ! Curse your women too,
Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire up
Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge
As only a " medium," only the kind of thing
They must humour, fondle . . . oh, to misconceive
Were too preposterous ! But I've paid them out !
They've had their wish—called for the naked truth,
And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare :
They had to blush a little and forgive !
" The fact is, children talk so ; in next world
All our conventions are reversed,—perhaps
Made light of : something like old prints, my dear !
The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,
A metropolis in the background,—o'er a bridge,
A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful groups
Of wayside travellers, peasants at their work,
And, full in front, quite unconcerned, why not ?
Three nymphs conversing with a cavalier,
And never a rag among them : ' fine,' folk cry—
And heavenly manners seem not much unlike !
Let Sludge go on ; we'll fancy it's in print ! "
If such as came for wool, sir, went home shorn,
Where is the wrong I did them ? 'Twas their choice ;
They tried the adventure, ran the risk, tossed up
And lost, as some one's sure to do in games ;

They fancied I was made to lose,—smoked glass
Useful to spy the sun through, spare their eyes :
And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
They thought to pierce, and, for their pains, grew blind,
Whose were the fault but theirs ? While, as things go,
Their loss amounts to gain, the more's the shame !
They've had their peep into the spirit-world,
And all this world may know it ! They've fed fat
Their self-conceit which else had starved : what chance
Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
And compassing distinction from the flock,
Friends of a feather ? Well, they paid for it,
And not prodigiously ; the price o' the play,
Not counting certain pleasant interludes,
Was scarce a vulgar play's worth. When you buy
The actor's talent, do you dare propose
For his soul beside ? Whereas, my soul you buy !
Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be Macbeth,
Or you'll not hear his first word ! Just go through
That slight formality, swear himself's the Thane,
And thenceforth he may strut and fret his hour,
Spout, spawl, or spin his target, no one cares !
Why hadn't I leave to play tricks, Sludge as Sludge ?
Enough of it all ! I've wiped out scores with you—
Vented your fustian, let myself be streaked
Like tom-fool with your ochre and carmine,
Worn patchwork your respectable fingers sewed
To metamorphose somebody,—yes, I've earned
My wages, swallowed down my bread of shame,
And shake the crumbs off—where but in your face ?

As for religion—why, I served it, sir !
I'll stick to that ! With my *phenomena*
I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least, Swedenborg !
In fact, it's just the proper way to baulk
These troublesome fellows—liars, one and all,
Are not these sceptics ? Well, to baffle them,

No use in being squeamish : lie yourself !
Erect your buttress just as wide o' the line,
Your side, as they've built up the wall on theirs ;
Where both meet, midway in a point, is truth,
High overhead : so, take your room, pile bricks,
Lie ! Oh, there's titillation in all shame !
What snow may lose in white, it gains in rose !
Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—nor a bad exchange !
Glory be on her, for the good she wrought,
Breeding belief anew 'neath ribs of death,
Brow-beating now the unabashed before,
Ridding us of their whole life's gathered straws
By a live coal from the altar ! Why, of old,
Great men spent years and years in writing books
To prove we've souls, and hardly proved it then :
Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and me !
Surely, to this good issue, all was fair—
Not only fondling Sludge, but, even suppose
He let escape some spice of knavery,—well,
In wisely being blind to it ! Don't you praise
Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye
And saying . . . what was it—that he could not see
The signal he was bothered ? Ay, indeed !

I'll go beyond : there's a real love of a lie,
Liars find ready-made for lies they make,
As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-plum.
At best, 'tis never pure and full belief ;
Those furthest in the quagmire,—don't suppose
They strayed there with no warning, got no chance
Of a filth-speck in their face, which they clenched teeth,
Bent brow against ! Be sure they had their doubts,
And fears, and fairest challenges to try
The floor o' the seeming solid sand ! But no !
Their faith was pledged, acquaintance too apprised,
All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs waved,
And Sludge called " pet " : 'twas easier marching on
To the promised land ; join those who, Thursday next
 . (2,376)

Meant to meet Shakespeare ; better follow Sludge—
Prudent, oh sure !—on the alert how else ?
But making for the mid-bog, all the same !
To hear your outcries, one would think I caught
Miss Stokes by the scuff o' the neck, and pitched her flat,
Foolish-face-foremost ! Hear these simpletons,
That's all I beg, before my work's begun,
Before I've touched them with my finger-tip !
Thus they await me (do but listen, now !
It's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate
The baby voice, though) " In so many tales
Must be some truth, truth though a pin-point big,
Yet, some : a single man's deceived, perhaps—
Hardly, a thousand : to suppose one cheat
Can gull all these, were more miraculous far
Than aught we should confess a miracle "—
And so on. Then the Judge sums up—(it's rare)—
Bids you respect the authorities that leap
To the judgment-seat at once,—why don't you note
The limpid nature, the unblemished life,
The spotless honour, indisputable sense
Of the first upstart with his story ? What—
Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now
Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble him ?

Fools, these are : ay, and how of their opposites
Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,
Believe for a moment ?—Men emasculate,
Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs use,
With superstition safely,—cold of blood,
Who saw what made for them in the mystery,
Took their occasion, and supported Sludge
—As proselytes ? No, thank you, far too shrewd !
—But promisers of fair play, encouragers
Of the claimant ; who in candour needs must hoist
Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of Sludge
To carry off, criticize, and cant about !
Didn't Athens treat Saint Paul so ?—at any rate,

It's "a new thing," philosophy fumbles at.
Then there's the other picker out of pearl
From dung-heaps,—ay, your literary man,
Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with Sludge
Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust
Of the doctrine, flavours thence, he well knows how,
The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
All for the book's sake, and the public's stare,
And the cash that's God's sole solid in this world !
Look at him ! Try to be too bold, too gross
For the master ! Not you ! He's the man for muck ;
Shovel it forth, full-splash, he'll smooth your brown
Into artistic richness, never fear !
Find him the crude stuff ; when you recognize
Your lie again, you'll doff your hat to it,
Dressed out for company ! " For company,"
I say, since there's the relish of success :
Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,
Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
Who ushered in the stranger : you must sigh
" How melancholy, he, the only one
Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth
Himself gave birth to ! "—There's the triumph's smack !
That man would choose to see the whole world roll
I' the slime o' the slough, so he might touch the tip
Of his brush with what I call the best of browns—
Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the power
Of the outworn umber and bistre !

Yet I think
There's a more hateful form of foolery—
The social sage's, Solomon of saloons
And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block
To try the edge of his faculty upon,
Prove how much common sense he'll hack and hew
In the critical minute 'twixt the soup and fish !
These were my patrons : these, and the like of them

Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it,—
These I have injured ! Gratitude to these ?
The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute
To the greenhorn and the bully—friends of hers,
From the wag that wants the queer jokes for his club,
To the snuff-box decorator, honest man,
Who just was at his wits' end where to find
So genial a Pasiphae ! All and each
Pay, compliment, protect from the police,
And how she hates them for their pains, like me !
So much for my remorse at thanklessness
Toward a deserving public !

But, for God ?

Ay, that's a question ! Well ! sir, since you press—
(How you do tease the whole thing out of me !
I don't mean you, you know, when I say " them " :
Hate you, indeed ! But that Miss Stokes, that Judge !
Enough, enough—with sugar : thank you, sir !)
Now for it, then ! Will you believe me, though ?
You've heard what I confess ; I don't unsay
A single word : I cheated when I could,
Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
Wrote-down names weak in sympathetic ink,
Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-match,
And all the rest ; believe that : believe this,
By the same token, though it seem to set
The crooked straight again, unsay the said,
Stick up what I've thrown down ; I can't help that :
It's truth ! I somehow vomit truth to-day.
This trade of mine—I don't know, can't be sure
But there was something in it, tricks and all !
Really, I want to light up my own mind.
They were tricks,—true, but what I mean to add
Is also true. First,—don't it strike you, sir ?
Go back to the beginning,—the first fact
We're taught is, there's a world beside this world,
With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry ;

That much within that world once sojourned here,
That all upon this world will visit there,
And therefore that we, bodily here below,
Must have exactly such an interest
In learning what may be the ways o' the world
Above us, as the disembodied folk
Have (by all analogic likelihood)
In watching how things go in the old world
With us, their sons, successors, and what not.
Oh, yes, with added powers probably,
Fit for the novel state,—old loves grown pure,
Old interests understood aright,—they watch !
Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to help,
Proportionate to advancement : they're ahead,
That's all—do what we do, but noblier done—
Use plate, whereas we eat our meals off delf,
(To use a figure.)

Concede that, and I ask
Next what may be the mode of intercourse
Between us men here, and those once-men there ?
First comes the Bible's speech ; then, history
With the supernatural element,—you know—
All that we sucked in with our mothers' milk,
Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
Till it's found bone of bone and flesh of flesh.
See now, we start with the miraculous,
And know it used to be, at all events :
What's the first step we take, and can't but take,
In arguing from the known to the obscure ?
Why this : " What was before, may be to-day.
Since Samuel's ghost appeared to Saul,—of course
My brother's spirit may appear to me."
Go tell your teacher that ! What's his reply ?
What brings a shade of doubt for the first time
O'er his brow late so luminous with faith ?
" Such things have been," says he, " and there's no
doubt

Such things may be : but I advise mistrust
Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more than all, your brain,
Unless it be of your great-grandmother,
Whenever they propose a ghost to you ! ”
The end is, there’s a composition struck ;
’Tis settled, we’ve some way of intercourse
Just as in Saul’s time ; only, different :
How, when and where, precisely,—find it out !
I want to know, then, what’s so natural
As that a person born into this world
And seized on by such teaching, should begin
With firm expectancy and a frank look-out
For his own allotment, his especial share
In the secret,—his particular ghost, in fine ?
I mean, a person born to look that way,
Since natures differ : take the painter-sort,
One man lives fifty years in ignorance
Whether grass be green or red,—“ No kind of eye
For colour,” say you ; while another picks
And puts away even pebbles, when a child,
Because of bluish spots and pinky veins—
“ Give him forthwith a paint-box ! ” Just the same
Was I born . . . “ medium,” you won’t let me say,—
Well, seer of the supernatural
Everywhen, everyhow and everywhere,—
Will that do ?

I and all such boys of course
Started with the same stock of Bible-truth ;
Only,—what in the rest you style their sense,
Instinct, blind reasoning but imperative,
This, betimes, taught them the old world had one law
And ours another : “ New world, new laws,” cried they :
“ None but old laws, seen everywhere at work,”
Cried I, and by their help explained my life
The Jews’ way, still a working way to me.
Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved the lights,
Or Santa Claus slid down on New Year’s Eve

And stuffed with cakes the stocking at my bed,
Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean the fingered slate
Of the sum that came to grief the day before.

This could not last long : soon enough I found
Who had worked wonders thus, and to what end .
But did I find all easy, like my mates ?
Henceforth no supernatural any more ?
Not a whit : what projects the billiard-balls ?
“ A cue,” you answer : “ Yes, a cue,” said I ;
“ But what hand, off the cushion, moved the cue ?
What unseen agency, outside the world,
Prompted its puppets to do this and that,
Put cakes and shoes and slates into their mind,
These mothers and aunts, nay even schoolmasters ? ”
Thus high I sprang, and there have settled since.
Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,
About the greater godsend, what you call
The serious gains and losses of my life.
What do I know or care about your world
Which either is or seems to be ? This snap
Of my fingers, sir ! My care is for myself ;
Myself am whole and sole reality
Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
Gathered about it : that’s the use of things.
’Tis easy saying they serve vast purposes,
Advantage their grand selves : be it true or false,
Each thing may have two uses. What’s a star ?
A world, or a world’s sun : doesn’t it serve
As taper also, time-piece, weather-glass,
And almanac ? Are stars not set for signs
When we should shear our sheep, sow corn, prune trees ?
The Bible says so.

Well, I add one use
To all the acknowledged uses, and declare
If I spy Charles’s Wain at twelve to-night,
It warns me, “ Go, nor lose another day, .

And have your hair cut, Sludge ! ” You laugh : and
why ?

Were such a sign too hard for God to give ?

No : but Sludge seems too little for such grace :

Thank you, sir ! So you think, so does not Sludge !

When you and good men gape at Providence,

Go into history and bid us mark

Not merely powder-plots prevented, crowns

Kept on kings’ heads by miracle enough,

But private mercies—oh, you’ve told me, sir,

Of such interpositions ! How yourself

Once, missing on a memorable day

Your handkerchief—just setting out, you know,—

You must return to fetch it, lost the train,

And saved your precious self from what befell

The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.

You tell, and ask me what I think of this ?

Well, sir, I think then, -since you needs must know,

What matter had you and Boston city to boot

Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings ? Much

To you, no doubt : for me—undoubtedly

The cutting of my hair concerns me more,

Because, however sad the truth may seem,

Sludge is of all-importance to himself.

You set apart that day in every year

For special thanksgiving, were a heathen else :

Well, I who cannot boast the like escape,

Suppose I said “ I don’t thank Providence

For my part, owing it no gratitude ? ”

“ Nay, but you owe as much ”—you’d tutor me,

“ You, every man alive, for blessings gained

In every hour of the day, could you but know !

I saw my crowning mercy : all have such,

Could they but see ! ” Well, sir, why don’t they see ?

“ Because they won’t look,—or perhaps, they can’t.”

Then, sir, suppose I can, and will, and do

Look, microscopically as is right,

Into each hour with its infinitude

Of influences at work to profit Sludge ?
For that's the case : I've sharpened up my sight
To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast
Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call such facts
Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
And those same thanks which you exact from me,
Prove too prodigious payment : thanks for what,
If nothing guards and guides us little men ?
No, no, sir ! You must put away your pride,
Resolve to let Sludge into partnership !
I live by signs and omens : looked at the roof
Where the pigeons settle—" If the further bird,
The white, takes wing first, I'll confess when thrashed ;
Not, if the blue does "—so I said to myself
Last week, lest you should take me by surprise :
Off flapped the white,—and I'm confessing, sir !
Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
With only me, in the world : how can you tell ?
" Because unlikely ! " Was it likelier, now,
That this our one out of all worlds beside,
The what-d'you-call-'em millions, should be just
Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
And the rest o' the tale ? Yet the tale's true, you know :
Such undeserving clod was graced so once ;
Why not graced likewise undeserving Sludge ?
Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy rags ?
All you can bring against my privilege
Is, that another way was taken with you,—
Which I don't question. It's pure grace, my luck.
I'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
And need no formal summoning. You've a help ;
Holloa his name or whistle, clap your hands,
Stamp with your foot or pull the bell : all's one,
He understands you want him, here he comes.
Just so, I come at the knocking : you, sir, wait
The tongue of the bell, nor stir before you catch
Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper brisk,

Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer
Your mother's face turned heavenward : short of these
There's no authentic intimation, eh ?
Well, when you hear, you'll answer them, start up
And stride into the presence, top of toe,
And there find Sludge beforehand, Sludge that sprung
At noise o' the knuckle on the partition-wall !
I think myself the more religious man.
Religion's all or nothing ; it's no mere smile
Of contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
No quality of the finelier-tempered clay
Like its whiteness or its lightness ; rather, stuff
Of the very stuff, life of life, self of self.
I tell you, men won't notice ; when they do,
They'll understand. I notice nothing else,
I'm eyes, ears, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,
Nothing eludes me, everything's a hint,
Handle and help. It's all absurd, and yet
There's something in it all, I know : how much ?
No answer ! What does that prove ? Man's still man,
Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work
When's all done ; but, if somewhat's done, like this,
Or not done, is the case the same ? Suppose
I blunder in my guess at the true sense
Of the knuckle-summons, nine times out of ten,—
What if the tenth guess happen to be right ?
If the tenth shovel-load of powdered quartz
Yield me the nugget ? I gather, crush, sift all,
Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.
To give you a notion, now—(let who wins, laugh !)
When first I see a man, what do I first ?
Why, count the letters which make up his name,
And as their number chances, even or odd,
Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course :
Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured name,
And haven't I found a patron, sir, in you ?
" Shall I cheat this stranger ? " I take apple-pips,
Stick one in either *canthus* of my eye,

And if the left drops first—(your left, sir, stuck)
I'm warned, I let the trick alone this time.
You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,
You judge of character by other rules :
Don't your rules sometimes fail you ? Pray, what rule
Have you judged Sludge by hitherto ?

Oh, be sure,

You, everybody blunders, just as I,
In simpler things than these by far ! For see :
I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre
Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,
Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,
And then declared, for outcome of his pains,
Next summer must be dampish : 'twas a drought.
His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,
Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent. thereby,
And proved a sage indeed : how came his lore ?
Because one brindled heifer, late in March,
Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow
He got into his head that drought was meant !
I don't expect all men can do as much :
Such kissing goes by favour. You must take
A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist
I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
Open-mouthed, like my friend the ant-eater,
Letting all nature's loosely-guarded motes
Settle and, slick, be swallowed ! Think yourself
The one i' the world, the one for whom the world
Was made, expect it tickling at your mouth !
Then will the swarm of busy buzzing flies,
Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell, thrive,
Breed, multiply, and bring you food enough.

I can't pretend to mind your smiling, sir !
Oh, what you mean is this ! Such intimate way,
Close converse, frank exchange of offices,
Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great

Except perhaps the life of the worm or fly
Which fed there ? These were " small " and men were
great.

Well, sir, the old way's altered somewhat since,
And the world wears another aspect now :
Somebody turns our spyglass round, or else
Puts a new lens in it : grass, worm, fly grow big :
We find great things are made of little things,
And little things go lessening till at last
Comes God behind them. Talk of mountains now ?
We talk of mould that heaps the mountains, mites
That throng the mould, and God that makes the mites.
The Name comes close behind a stomach-cyst,
The simplest of creations, just a sac
That's mouth, heart, legs and belly at once, yet lives
And feels, and could do neither, we conclude,
If simplified still further one degree :
The small becomes the dreadful and immense !
Lightning, forsooth ? No word more upon that !
A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
With a bit of wire and knob of brass, and there's
Your dollar's-worth of lightning ! But the cyst—
The life of the least of the little things ?

No, no !

Preachers and teachers try another tack,
Come near the truth this time : they put aside
Thunder and lightning : " That's mistake," they cry,
" Thunderbolts fall for neither fright nor sport,
But do appreciable good, like tides,
Changes of the wind, and other natural facts—
' Good ' meaning good to man, his body or soul.
Mediate, immediate, all things minister
To man,—that's settled : be our future text
' We are His children ! ' " So, they now harangue
About the intention, the contrivance, all
That keeps up an incessant play of love,—
See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it !

Well, sir, I put this question : I'm a child ?
I lose no time, but take you at your word :
How shall I act a child's part properly ?
Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to live
With such a thought as this a-worrying you ?
“ She has it in her power to throttle me,
Or stab or poison : she may turn me out,
Or lock me in,—nor stop at this, to-day,
But cut me off to-morrow from the estate
I look for ”—(long may you enjoy it, sir !)
“ In brief, she may unchild the child I am.”
You never had such crotchets ? Nor have I !
Who, frank confessing childship from the first,
Cannot both fear and take my ease at once,
So, don't fear,—know what might be, well enough,
But know, too, child-like, that it will not be,
At least in my case, mine, the son and heir
Of the kingdom, as yourself proclaim my style.
But do you fancy I stop short at this ?
Wonder if suit and service, sons and heirs
Needs must expect, I dare pretend to find ?
If, looking for signs proper to such an one,
I straight perceive them irresistible ?
Concede that homage is a son's plain right,
And, never mind the nods and raps and winks,
'Tis the pure obvious supernatural
Steps forward, does its duty : why, of course !
I have presentiments ; my dreams come true :
I fancy a friend stands whistling all in white
Blithe as a boblink, and he's dead I learn.
I take dislike to a dog my favourite long,
And sell him ; he goes mad next week and snaps.
I guess that stranger will turn up to-day
I have not seen these three years ; there's his knock.
I wager “ sixty peaches on that tree ! ”—
That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
That your wife's brother's cousin's name was George—

And win on all points. Oh, you wince at this ?
You'd fain distinguish between gift and gift,
Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
O' the elbow when at whist he ought to trump ?
With Sludge it's too absurd ? *Fine, draw the line*
Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is not mine !

Bless us, I'm turning poet ! It's time to end.
How you have drawn me out, sir ! All I ask
Is—am I heir or not heir ? If I'm he,
Then, sir, remember, that same personage
(To judge by what we read in the newspaper)
Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
To carry up and down his coronet,
Another servant, probably a duke,
To hold egg-nogg in readiness : why want
Attendance, sir, when helps in his father's house
Abound, I'd like to know ?

Enough of talk !
My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.
Why, which of those who say they disbelieve,
Your clever people, but has dreamed his dream,
Caught his coincidence, stumbled on his fact
He can't explain, (he'll tell you smilingly)
Which he's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,
So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of it :
Bidding you still be on your guard, you know,
Because one fact don't make a system stand,
Nor prove this an occasional escape
Of spirit beneath the matter : that's the way !
Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by piece,
The fact in California, the fine gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded these,
But never made a system stand, nor dug !
So wise men hold out in each hollowed palm
A handful of experience, sparkling fact

They can't explain ; and since their rest of life
Is all explainable, what proof in this ?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of gold,
And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each fool has found
Of the million other such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,
Truth questionless though unexplainable,
And the miraculous proved the commonplace !
The other fools believed in mud, no doubt—
Failed to know gold they saw : was that so strange ?
Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-fugues,
" Time " with the foil in carte, jump their own height,
Cut the mutton with the broadsword, skate a five,
Make the red hazard with the cue, clip nails
While swimming, in five minutes row a mile,
Pull themselves three feet up with the left arm,
Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances ?
The Sludge with luck, who sees the spiritual facts
His fellows strive and fail to see, may rank
With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share

The drawback ! Think it over by yourself ;
I have not heart, sir, and the fire's gone grey.
Defect somewhere compensates for success,
Everyone knows that. Oh, we're equals, sir !
The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win the race :
Do you suppose I 'scape the common lot ?
Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping both,
I guess what's going on outside the veil,
Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time
In the islands where his kind are, so must fall
To capering by himself some shiny night,
As if your back-yard were a plot of spice—

Thus am I 'ware of the spirit-world : while you,
 Blind as a beetle that way,—for amends,
 Why, you can double fist and floor me, sir !
 Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid horse of yours,
 Laugh while it lightens, play with the great dog,
 Speak your mind though it vex some friend to hear,
 Never brag, never bluster, never blush,—
 In short, you've pluck, when I'm a coward—there !
 I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
 I'm paralyzed, my hand's no more a hand,
 Nor my head, a head, in danger : you can smile
 And change the pipe in your cheek. Your gift's not mine.
 Would you swap for mine ? No ! but you'd add my gift
 To yours : I dare say ! I too sigh at times,
 Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor flinch,
 Kept cool when threatened, did not mind so much
 Being dressed gaily, making strangers stare,
 Eating nice things ; when I'd amuse myself,
 I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain,
 I'm—now the President, now, Jenny Lind,
 Now, Emerson, now, the Benicia Boy—
 With all the civilized world a-wondering
 And worshipping. I know it's folly and worse ;
 I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the soul :
 But I can't cure myself,—despond, despair,
 And then, hey, presto, there's a turn of the wheel,
 Under comes uppermost, fate makes full amends ;
 Sludge knows and sees and hears a hundred things
 You all are blind to,—I've my taste of truth,
 Likewise my touch of falsehood,—vice no doubt,
 But you've your vices also : I'm content.

What, sir ? You won't shake hands ? “ Because I
 cheat !

You've found me out in cheating ! ” That's enough
 To make an apostle swear ! Why, when I cheat,
Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught in the act,
Are you, or rather, am I sure of the fact ?

(There's verse again, but I'm inspired somehow.)
Well then I'm not sure ! I may be, perhaps,
Free as a babe from cheating : how it began,
My gift,—no matter ; what 'tis got to be
In the end now, that's the question : answer that !
Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was holding mine,
Leading me whither, I had died of fright,
So, I was made believe I led myself.
If I should lay a six-inch plank from roof
To roof, you would not cross the street, one step,
Even at your mother's summons : but, being shrewd,
If I paste paper on each side of the plank
And swear 'tis solid pavement, why, you'll cross
Humming a tune the while, in ignorance
Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet below :
I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for stone.
Some impulse made me set a thing on the move
Which, started once, ran really by itself ;
Beer flows thus, suck the siphon ; toss the kite,
It takes the wind and floats of its own force.
Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack
Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it !
Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,
She'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
Daily for weeks to come. I've told my lie,
And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine :
All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive !
I don't know if I move your hand sometimes
When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,
If my knee lifts the table all that height,
Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tilt,
Why the accordion plays a prettier waltz
Than I can pick out on the piano-forte,
Why I speak so much more than I intend,
Describe so many things I never saw.
I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
Will, and does cheat : but in another sense

I'm ready to believe my very self—
That every cheat's inspired, and every lie
Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all
If I know a way without it? This is why!
There's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice
In any desecration of one's soul
To a worthy end,—isn't it Herodotus
(I wish I could read Latin!) who describes
The single gift of the land's virginity,
Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,
(I've but a hazy notion—help me, sir!)
For one purpose in the world, one day in a life,
One hour in a day—thereafter, purity,
And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore!
Well, now, they understood a many things
Down by Nile city, or wherever it was!
I've always vowed, after the minute's lie,
And the good end's gain,—truth should be mine hence-
forth.

This goes to the root of the matter, sir,—this plain
Plump fact: accept it and unlock with it
The wards of many a puzzle!

Or, finally,

Why should I set so fine a gloss on things?
What need I care? I cheat in self-defence,
And there's my answer to a world of cheats!
Cheat? To be sure, sir! What's the world worth else?
Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars?
Don't it want trimming, turning, furbishing up
And polishing over? Your so-styled great men,
Do they accept one truth as truth is found,
Or try their skill at tinkering? What's your world?
Here are you born, who are, I'll say at once,
One of the luckiest whether in head and heart,
Body and soul, or all that helps the same.

Well, now, look back : what faculty of yours
Came to its full, had ample justice done
By growing when rain fell, biding its time,
Solidifying growth when earth was dead,
Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons due ?
Never ! You shot up and frost nipped you off,
Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you sprout ;
One faculty thwarted its fellow : at the end,
All you boast is, " I had proved a topping tree
In other climes "—yet this was the right clime
Had you foreknown the seasons. Young, you've force
Wasted like well-streams : old,—oh, then indeed,
Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes
Through which you'd play off wondrous waterwork ;
Only, no water left to feed their play !
Young,—you've a hope, an aim, a love ; it's tossed
And crossed and lost : you struggle on, some spark
Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
Through cold and pain ; these in due time subside,
Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded light
You mean to loose on the altered face of things,—
Up with it on the tripod ! It's extinct.
Spend your life's remnant asking, which was best,
Light smothered up that never peeped forth once,
Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine ?
Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit of it
Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on earth,
But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
Another life,—you've lost this world—you've gained
Its knowledge for the next.—What knowledge, sir,
Except that you know nothing ? Nay, you doubt
Whether 'twere better have made you man or brute,
If aught be true, if good and evil clash.
No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
There's your world !

Give it me ! I slap it brisk
With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre : what's it now ?

Changed like a rock-flat, rough with rusty weed,
At first wash-over of the returning wave !
All the dry dead impracticable stuff
Starts into life and light again ; this world
Pervaded by the influx from the next.
I cheat, and what's the happy consequence ?
You find full justice straightway dealt you out,
Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
As the price of worse than nothing ! No mere film
Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
Against the outstretch of your very arms
And legs in the sunshine moralists forbid !
What would you have ? Just speak and, there, you see !
You're supplemented, made a whole at last,
Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you songs,
And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
But so near, that the very difference piques,
Shows that e'en better than this best will be—
This passing entertainment in a hut
Whose bare walls take your taste since, one stage more,
And you arrive at the palace : all half real,
And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
That helps the interchange of natures, flesh
Transfused by souls, and such souls ! Oh, 'tis choice !
And if at whiles the bubble, blown too thin,
Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly see
The real world through the false,—what *do* you see ?
Is the old so ruined ? You find you're in a flock
Of the youthful, earnest, passionate—genius, beauty,
Rank and wealth also, if you care for these,
And all depose their natural rights, hail you,
(That's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-fellow,
Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow mine,
I veritably possess them—banish doubt,
And reticence and modesty alike !

Why, here's the Golden Age, old Paradise
Or new Eutopia ! Here is life indeed,
And the world well won now, yours for the first time !

And all this might be, may be, and with good help
Of a little lying shall be : so, Sludge lies !
Why, he's at worst your poet who sings how Greeks
That never were, in Troy which never was,
Did this or the other impossible great thing !
He's Lowell—it's a world, you smile and say,
Of his own invention—wondrous Longfellow,
Surprising Hawthorne ! Sludge does more than they,
And acts the books they write : the more his praise !

But why do I mount to poets ? Take plain prose—
Dealers in common sense, set these at work,
What can they do without their helpful lies ?
Each states the law and fact and face of the thing
Just as he'd have them, finds what he thinks fit,
Is blind to what missuits him, just records
What makes his case out, quite ignores the rest.
It's a History of the World, the Lizard Age,
The Early Indians, the Old Country War,
Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you please,
All as the author wants it. Such a scribe
You pay and praise for putting life in stones,
Fire into fog, making the past your world.
There's plenty of " How did you contrive to grasp
The thread which led you through this labyrinth ?
How build such solid fabric out of air ?
How on so slight foundation found this tale,
Biography, narrative ? " or, in other words,
" How many lies did it require to make
The portly truth you here present us with ? "
" Oh," quoth the penman, purring at your praise,
" 'Tis fancy all ; no particle of fact :
I was poor and threadbare when I wrote that book
' Bliss in the Golden City.' I, at Thebes ?

We writers paint out of our heads, you see ! ”
“ —Ah, the more wonderful the gift in you,
The more creativeness and godlike craft ! ”
But I, do I present you with my piece,
It’s “ What, Sludge ? When my sainted mother spoke
The verses Lady Jane Grey last composed
About the rosy bower in the seventh heaven
Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep house,—
You made the raps ? ’Twas your invention that ?
Cur, slave and devil ! ”—eight fingers and two thumbs
Stuck in my throat !

Well, if the marks seem gone,
’Tis because stiffish cock-tail, taken in time,
Is better for a bruise than arnica.
There, sir ! I bear no malice : ’t isn’t in me.
I know I acted wrongly : still, I’ve tried
What I could say in my excuse,—to show
The devil’s not all devil . . . I don’t pretend,
An angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir ! And I’ve lost you, lost myself,
Lost all, l-l-l- . . .

No—are you in earnest, sir ?
O, yours, sir, is an angel’s part ! I know
What prejudice must be, what the common course
Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit :
Only you rise superior to it all !
No, sir, it don’t hurt much ; it’s speaking long
That makes me choke a little : the marks will go !
What ? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,
And not a word to Greeley ? One—one kiss
Of the hand that saves me ! You’ll not let me speak
I well know, and I’ve lost the right, too true !
But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)
Your sainted . . . Well, sir, be it so ! That’s, I think,
My bed-room candle. Good night ! Bl-l-less you, sir !

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard ! Cowardly scamp !
I only wish I dared burn down the house
And spoil your sniggering ! Oh, what, you're the man ?
You're satisfied at last ? You've found out Sludge ?
We'll see that presently : my turn, sir, next !
I too can tell my story : brute,—do you hear ?—
You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
In just such a fit of passion : no, it was . . .
To get this house of hers, and many a note
Like these . . . I'll pocket them, however, . . . five,
Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,
Or else you poisoned her ! Confound the cuss !
Where was my head ? I ought to have prophesied
He'll die in a year and join her : that's the way.

I don't know where my head is : what had I done ?
How did it all go ! I said he poisoned her,
And hoped he'd have grace given him to repent,
Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
And called me cheat : I thrashed him,—who could help?
He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
To cut and run and save him from disgrace :
I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
An end of him ! Begin elsewhere anew !
Boston's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
V-notes are something, liberty still more.
Beside, is he the only fool in the world ?

APPARENT FAILURE

" We shall soon lose a celebrated building."

Paris Newspaper.

No, for I'll save it ! Seven years since,
I passed through Paris, stopped a day
To see the baptism of your Prince ;
Saw, made my bow, and went my way :

Walking the heat and headache off,
I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
So sauntered till—what met my eyes ?

Only the Doric little Morgue !
The dead-house where you show your drowned :
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,
Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
One pays one's debt in such a case ;
I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
Keeping a tolerable face
Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked :
Let them ! No Briton's to be balked !

First came the silent gazers ; next,
A screen of glass, we're thankful for ;
Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
The three men who did most abhor
Their life in Paris yesterday,
So killed themselves : and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

Poor men, God made, and all for that !
The reverence struck me ; o'er each head
Religiously was hung its hat,
Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
Sacred from touch : each had his berth,
His bounds, his proper place of rest,
Who last night tenanted on earth
Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalt seemed best.

How did it happen, my poor boy ?
You wanted to be Buonaparte

And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your heart ?
You, old one by his side, I judge,
Were, red as blood, a socialist,
A leveller ! Does the Empire grudge
You've gained what no Republic missed ?
Be quiet, and unclench your fist !

And this—why, he was red in vain,
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue !
What fancy was it turned your brain ?
Oh, women were the prize for you !
Money gets women, cards and dice
Get money, and ill-luck gets just
The copper couch and one clear nice
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
The right thing to extinguish lust !

It's wiser being good than bad ;
It's safer being meek than fierce :
It's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched ;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched ;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

[KARSHOOK = THISTLE]

“ WOULD a man 'scape the rod ? ”
Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
“ See that he turn to God
The day before his death.”

“ Ay could a man inquire
When it shall come ! ” I say,
The Rabbi’s eye shoots fire—
“ Then let him turn to-day ! ”

Quoth a young Sadducee :
“ Reader of many rolls,
Is it so certain we
Have, as they tell us, souls ? ”

“ Son, there is no reply ! ”
The Rabbi bit his beard :
“ Certain, a soul have *I*—
We may have none,” he sneered.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram’s-Hammer,
The Right-hand Temple-column,
Taught babes in grace their grammar,
And struck the simple, solemn.

THE END

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